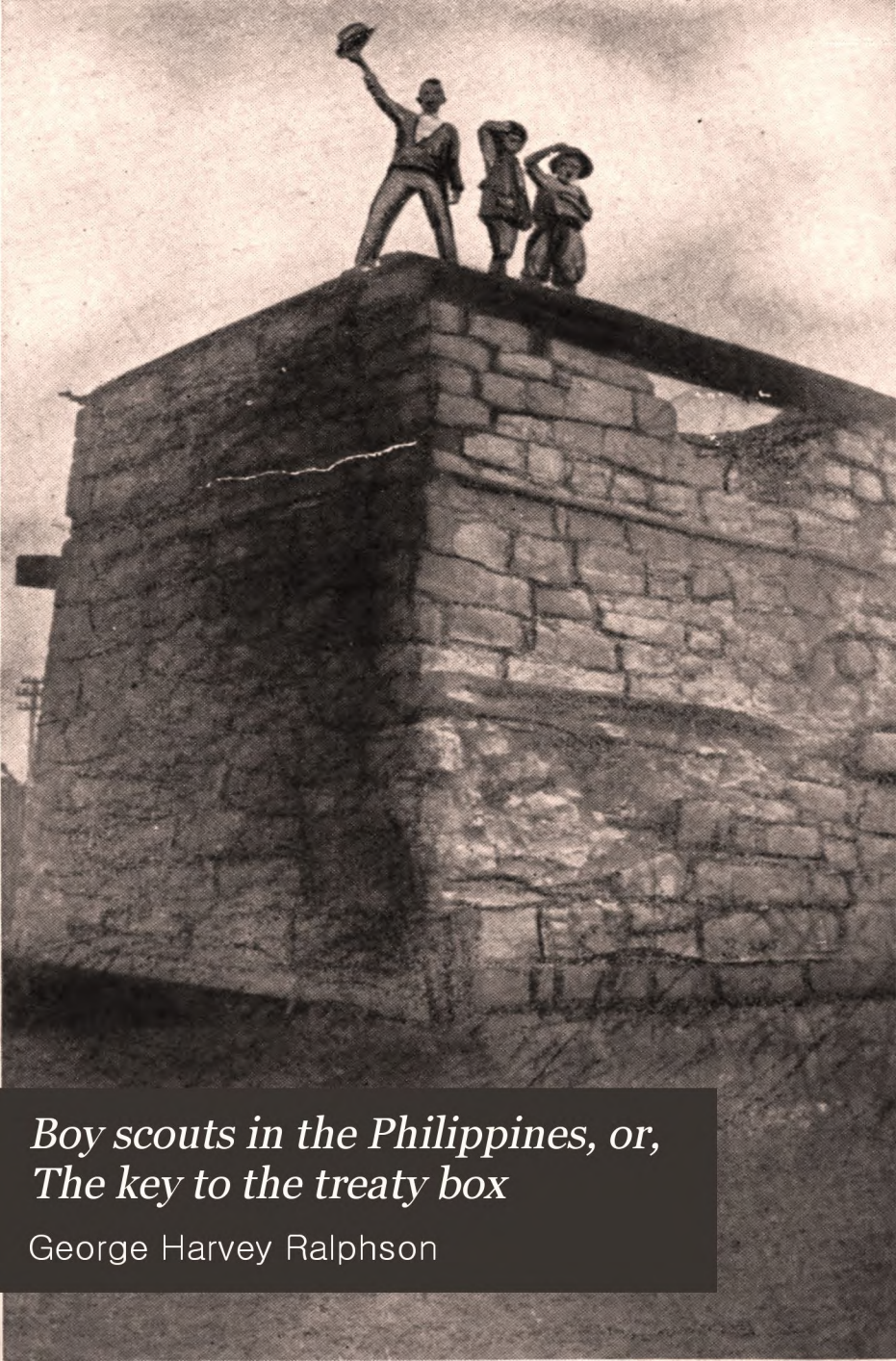
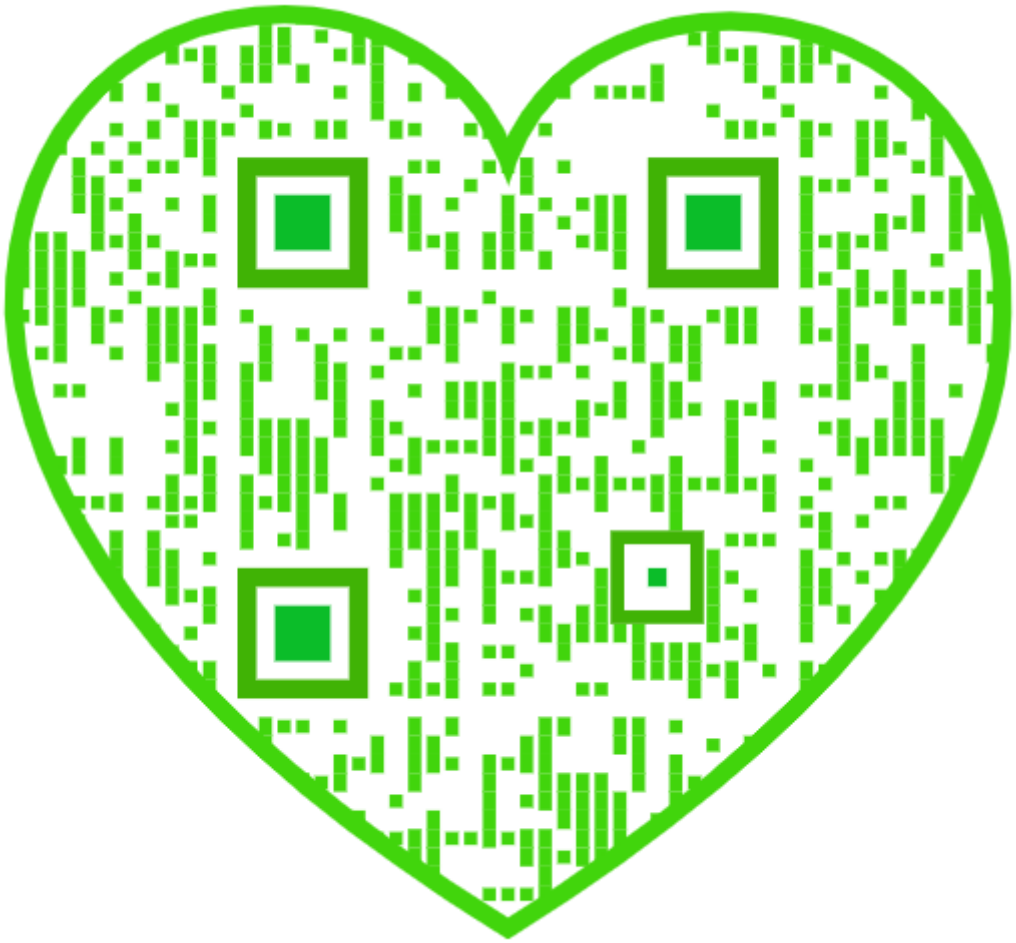


Boy scouts in the Philippines, or, The key to the treaty box

George Harvey Ralphson



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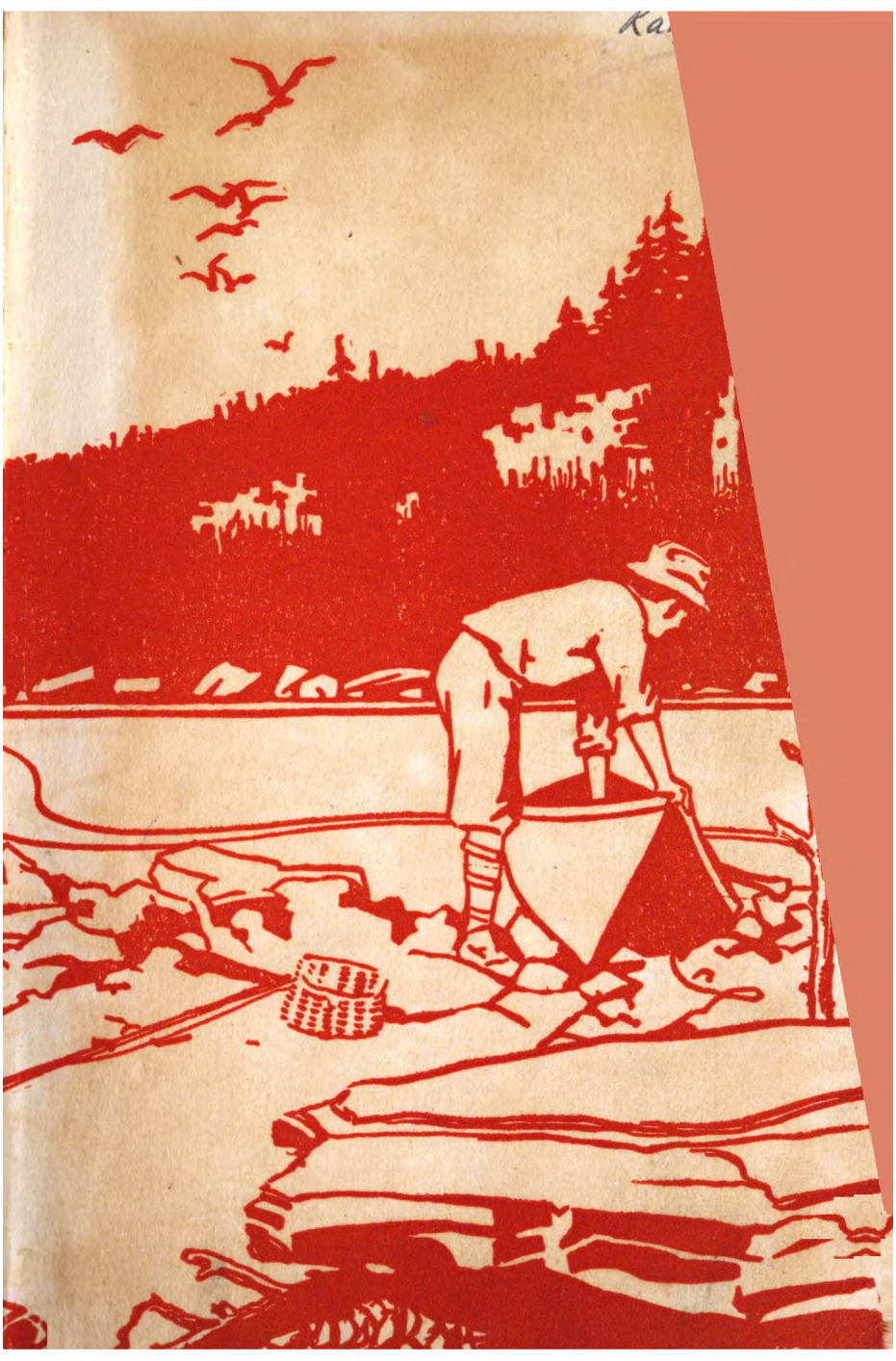

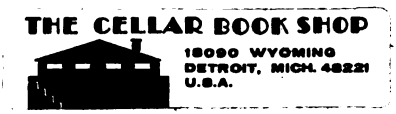
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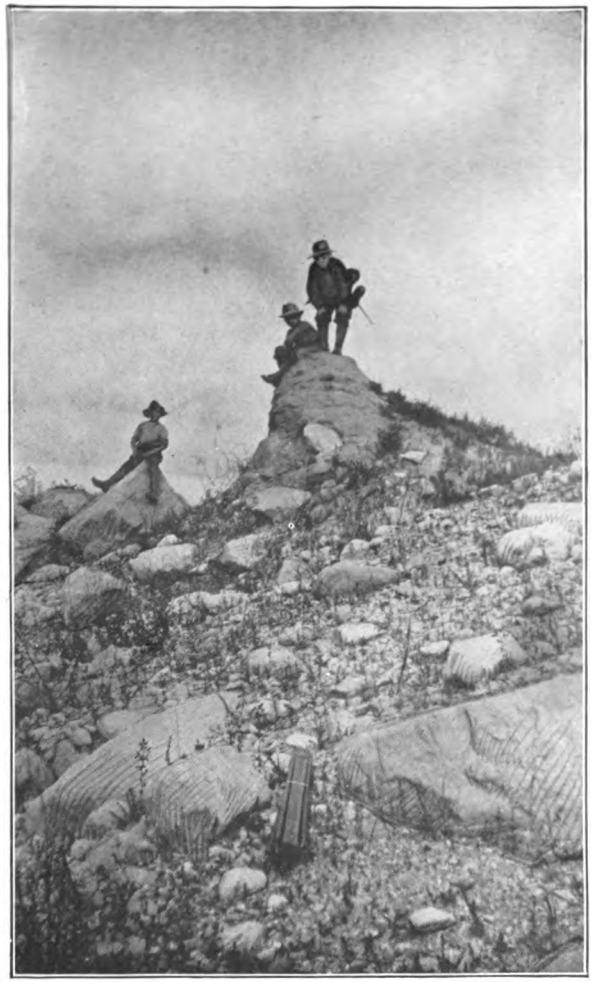

FRONTISPIECE. Boy Scouts in the Philippines; or The Key to the Treaty Box.

Boy Scouts in the Philippines

Or

The Key to the Treaty Box

By

Scout Master G. Harvey Ralphson

Author of

"Boy Scouts in Mexico; or On Guard with Uncle Sam."

"Boy Scouts in the Canal Zone; or The Plot Against Uncle Sam."

"Boy Scouts in the Northwest; or Fighting Forest Fires."

Embellished with full page and other illustrations.

M. A. Donohue & Company, Chicago

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Boy Scouts in the Philippines

OR

The Key to the Treaty Box

CHAPTER I.

BLACK BEARS AND WOLVES.

"Wake up—wake up—wake up!"

Frank Shaw, passenger on the United States army transport *Union*, San Francisco to the Philippines, awoke in his cabin to find the freckled face of Jimmie McGraw grinning above him.

"What's the use?" he demanded, sleepily and impatiently. "It will be only another roasting day on a hot deck on an ocean fit to stew fish in. What's the use of getting up? I'm going to sleep again."

Frank's intentions were all right, but he did not go to sleep again. As he turned over and closed his eyes, Jimmie seized him deftly by the shoulders and dumped him out on the scarlet rug which covered the floor of the stateroom.

Frank was seventeen and Jimmie was younger, and so there was a mixture of legs and arms

and vocabulary for a moment, at the end of which Jimmie broke away and made for the door, which he had thoughtfully left open as a means of retreat.

Left thus alone on the tumbled blankets of the bunk from which he had been hustled, Frank rubbed his eyes, threw a pillow at his tormentor, and began making his way toward his cozy nest, much to Jimmie's disgust.

"Aw, come on!" the boy urged, still standing in a safe place by the doorway. "It's hot enough to melt brass in here, an' the siren's been shoutin' for half an hour! That means land—the Philippines! Perhaps you think you're lookin' for Battery Park, in little old New York! Get up an' look out of the port, over the rollin' sea, to the land of the little brown men!"

Looking through the doorway, over the boy's shoulders, Frank smiled serenely at what he saw and sat waiting for something to happen. Then Jimmie was propelled headlong into the room, where he landed squarely on top of the drowsy boy he had dragged out of bed. There was another scramble for points, and then two boys of about seventeen showed their faces in the doorway, laughing at the mix-up on the floor.

The transport's siren broke out again in its long, shrill greeting of the land which lay above the rim of the sea, and Frank, catapulting Jimmie against the wall at the back of the bunk, hastened to the open port and looked out.

The boys who had entered the cabin so unceremoniously were Ned Nestor and Jack Bosworth, who were traveling with Frank and Jimmie to the Philippines, the party being under the direction of Major John Ross, of the United States Secret Service.

They had left Panama about the middle of April, and it was now not far from the first of June, the transport having been delayed for a week at Honolulu, where she had put in for supplies. The boys had enjoyed the trip hugely, but were, nevertheless, not displeased at the sight of land.

Leave it to the lads themselves, and this was a Boy Scout expedition, although there was a serious purpose behind it. Ned Nestor and Jimmie McGraw were members of the Wolf Patrol, Ned being the Patrol Leader, while Frank Shaw and Jack Bosworth were members of the famous Black Bear Patrol, both of the city of New York.

Those who have read the first two books of this series* will readily understand the object of this journey to the Philippines, but for the information of those who have not read the books it may be well to state here that while in Mexico and the Canal Zone Ned Nestor had been able to render valuable services to the United States government.

At the close of his work in the Secret Service department of the Canal Zone government, he had been invited to accompany Major Ross to the Philippines for the purpose of assisting in the uncovering of an alleged treasonable plot against the peace of the Islands and the continued supremacy of the United States Government there.

Knowing little of what there was to be done, or of what was expected of him, Ned had accepted the invitation to enter the Secret Service, stipulating only that his chums should be permitted to accompany him to Uncle Sam's new and somewhat unruly possessions in Asia.

"I won't go if we can't make a Boy Scout outing of it," he had insisted. "I shall be glad to be of service to the government, but I want the boys to have a jolly time, too. There must

*Boy Scouts in Mexico; or, On Guard with Uncle Sam.
Boy Scouts in the Canal Zone; or, The Plot Against Uncle Sam.

be plenty of opportunities for adventure in the Philippines," he had added, thinking of the many odd customs of the tribes of natives on the twelve hundred islands that constitute the group.

"I shall be only too glad to have your friends go," the Major had replied, "for I understand that they contributed not a little to the success of your efforts in Mexico and the Canal Zone."

"I couldn't have done a thing without them," had been Ned's generous reply, and so it was all arranged.

However, only three of the boys who had accompanied Ned from New York to the Canal Zone had been at liberty to go to the Philippines, the others reluctantly turning back home. The three to go were now assembled in the cabin occupied by Frank Shaw, looking out to the dim line of land.

Frank Shaw was the son of the owner and editor of an influential daily newspaper in New York, Jack Bosworth was the son of a wealthy board of trade man, and Jimmie McGraw was a Bowery newsboy who had attached himself to Ned Nestor, his patrol leader, just before the visit to Mexico and had clung to him like a puppy to a root, as the saying is, ever since.

"Come on, boys," Ned said, after an inspection of the ocean through the port, "let's go on deck. We can see the whole show from there."

The boys trooped up to the rail and were soon joined by Major Ross. It was now a little after dawn, and a sunrise breeze was lifting little ripples on an otherwise motionless sea. Spread out, a couple of miles away, was the outline of shore the siren was greeting.

It was a low coast, stretching away to right and left until lost in the mists of the morning. It looked monotonous and furry with forests, deserted and still, but in time the presence of man became observable.

A river wound down out of the trees and broke over a bar set against its mouth in the sea. On the right bank of the stream a tin roof glistened in the early sunlight. Wherever there is a tin roof there is civilization in some degree, though this seemed to be a sleepy one.

Presently the call of the siren brought forth a boat, not in the little bay, but up the river a few hundred yards. It moved down to the coastline with only the canopy, which was of faded scarlet cloth, and the heads of the rowers in view above the tops of the bushes and creepers which lined the stream.

The land smoked under the rising temperature brought on by the climbing sun, and Jimmie chuckled as he nudged Frank's arm.

"I see your finish there," he said. "A boy as fat as you are will melt over there. There's nothin' left of the brown men in the boat but their heads!"

Frank looked along the bow-shaped shore, over the palms, now touched with the red light of a hot morning, and wiped his streaming forehead.

"This doesn't look good to me!" he said. "I thought we were going to Manila!"

"Didn't Ned tell you about it?" asked Jack Bosworth.

"Not a word."

"Well, we're going to disembark here; I don't know the name of the place, or even if it has one, and make our way among some of these islands in a motor boat. There are a lot of secret service men at Manila who don't want to mix with us kids!"

"That's nice!" Jimmie cried. "We won't do a thing to 'em! We'll put it over 'em good, you see if we don't! I reckon Ned Nestor can give any of 'em half a string an' win out, at that!"

"Of course he can," Jack replied, "but I'm not kicking at this way of doing things. I'm thinking of the motor boat, and the long days and moony nights in the seas among these islands!"

"It will be great!" Jimmie admitted.

There was a short pause, and then he added, thoughtfully:

"Who's goin' to run the boat?"

"I can run it," was the reply.

"Yes, you can!"

"I own one," insisted Jack.

"Yes, an' you hire a man to run it!" Jimmie grinned. "I don't believe you can run a hand cultivator!"

"Of course not!" laughed Jack. "But I can operate a motor boat," he added.

"You can?" demanded Jimmie, with an exasperating grin. "Then perhaps you can tell me if the motor boat we're goin' to have has pneumatic brakes?"

"Sure it has!" laughed Jack. "And it also has a rudder that you can unship and use as a safety razor. You might open up a barber shop with it, only the eminent citizens over here don't have any more whiskers than a squash."

"You're gettin' dippy!" Jimmie shouted, darting away to the spot where Ned and the Major were standing.

Directly a flag broke out over the tin roof and in a short time the boat was at the transport's side. Full of enthusiasm, and with high hopes for the immediate future, the boys and the Major descended to the shaky little craft and the transport steamed off, her rails lined with soldiers and civilians cheering the boys and wishing them good luck.

The last voice they heard as the boat crossed the bar and swung into the sluggish current of the river was that of Captain Helmer, who had made chums and companions of the boys on the way over.

"Good hunting!" he cried, through his megaphone, and the marine band struck up "Home, Sweet Home," "just to give us a cheerful mood on entering this desolate land!" as Major Ross declared.

"Do they all think we're goin' huntin'?" asked Jimmie, as the windrows of salt water heaped up by the transport grew smaller and lapped on the beach.

"Sure they do," replied Jack. "Do you think the Major told them we were going into

the jungles to catch a few recruits for the federal prison at Manila? Nice thing, that would be!"

"There are just two persons, so far as I know, outside of the Secret Service headquarters at Washington, who know what we are up to," Major Ross said. "These are Colonel Hill, of the Canal Zone force, and Captain Godwin, who is to receive us here."

The brown oarsmen tugged and strained at the oars, and the waters of the river came up to the rim of the native boat and crept in and spread themselves over the rotten floor. The boys were all glad when the prow touched the little dock at the lone pueblo where Uncle Sam's flag snapped in a breeze which was coming over the trees, bringing with it a musty smell of decaying undergrowth.

Captain Godwin met them at the landing with great hand outstretched. He was a stout, brown-faced man of fifty, with muscles like iron and a mind all stuffed and tucked in with the glory of the United States. He was proud of the service he had passed the greater part of his life in, and was proud of the record for efficiency he had made. A kindly, bluff, seasoned old man of war, with soft blue eyes and a hard hand.

"I should have sent the *Manhattan* after you," he said, after introductions had been made, "only there's something the matter with her batteries."

"You bet there is!" laughed Jimmie. "The only battery that never gets under foot or loses a shoe is at the foot of Broadway, in little old New York!"

"Hardly at the foot of Broadway," Jack began, but Jimmie interrupted.

"Never mind," he said, "if we know where it is! You go an' fix up this motor boat of the name of *Manhattan*, an' we'll have a ride."

"The boat will be ready by tomorrow morning," the Captain said, smiling at the friendly arguments of the two boys. "I presume you have your instructions?" he added.

"I have them here," Major Ross said, rather sternly, as he took a sealed packet from his pocket.

"When and where are you to open that packet?" asked the Captain.

"On my arrival at this place," was the dignified reply.

The Major seemed to be of opinion that the Captain was stepping on his official rights.

"Then we'll go up to the house and you look them over while I see what can be found to celebrate this auspicious event! I don't often have the pleasure of meeting four happy, husky, hungry boys fresh from the United States!"

"You're the goods, all right!" shouted Jimmie. "But how did you guess we were hungry?"

Captain Godwin laughed and clapped both his broad palms on his knees.

"How did I know?" he roared. "That's a good one! As if the boys weren't always as hungry as black bears!"

"There are two Black Bears in the party!" Jimmie said.

"And two Wolves!" Jack added.

Captain Godwin looked from face to face in smiling wonder, and the boys thrust all kinds of Boy Scout signs and words at him.

"I see," the Captain said, then. "I've heard of the Boy Scouts! And now we'll go up to the house. Never saw a Black Bear or a Wolf that wasn't hungry!"

The jolly Captain gave instructions to his servants and they promised, with many native grimaces and a waste of tribal vocabulary, to have a satisfying breakfast ready in half an hour. Then Godwin drew Major Ross and Ned

to one side, his good-natured face assuming a grave expression as he seated them in a private room of the rambling and wobbly old house.

"There's something unexpected here," he began, as the Major sat with his sealed instructions in hand, "and I wish you would open your packet immediately. To tell you the truth, I'm not a little worried."

The Major opened the packet and glanced hastily through several typed sheets. Then his keen eyes grew puzzled and he arose to his feet and looked out of the window.

"Something here I don't understand," he said. "Where's this Lieutenant Rowe?"

"You are to confer with him here?" asked the Captain, and Major Ross nodded assent. "Do you know what information he possesses?" continued the Captain, "what papers he has in his possession?"

"My instructions say he has important documents."

"Well," said the Captain, arising to his feet, "now I'll take you to the place where I last saw Lieutenant Rowe. He came here in the launch *Manhattan*, which you are to have use of, last night, and went to bed without talking much with me. I suspect that he brought the boat

from Manila, though I can't be sure. Anyway, he brought with him only two young men who did not seem to know much about the boat—Americans."

"Have you seen him, the Lieutenant, or either of the young men, this morning?" asked the Major, impatiently. "And why do you say you will take us to the place where you saw him last? What is wrong here?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "There are no known hostile elements here, and yet the little nipa hut where Rowe and his men lodged last night was found empty this morning—empty and the contents in disorder, the floor spotted with blood."

CHAPTER II.

IT'S UP TO THE BOY SCOUTS.

"Do you mean that he has been murdered?" asked the Major, his face, flushed before, looking gray and old.

"I don't know," was the reply. "I have tried to look on the bright side of the thing, but there's a subconscious warning in the back of my brain somewhere. I've tried to be jolly, this morning, but I've about reached the end of my store of optimism. It looks to me as if the Lieutenant had been made way with."

"This leaves me stranded," the Major said. "I am ordered to act only after acquiring later information concerning the situation, the same to be delivered by Lieutenant Rowe. In the absence of that information, what am I to do? My present orders may be all wrong."

"Perhaps," Ned suggested, "it may be well to visit this hut and see what we can discover there. The Lieutenant may have gone out for a morning's hunt."

"No such good luck as that," replied the Captain. "Why, the little furniture the hut

contains is broken to bits, and the floor is streaked with blood! There was a fight in there last night, depend upon it!"

"And no one heard anything unusual during the night?" asked Ned.

"Not that I know of."

"Are the usual residents of this place, so far as you know, all here this morning?" was the next question.

"I will ascertain that," said the Captain. "I learned of the strange happening only a few minutes before your arrival."

The three left the house, the only one of size there, and proceeded down a mushy street between huts and thickets until they came to a little nipa hut set high on poles. They climbed the bamboo stairs and stood on the swaying porch in front, seeing no one about the place.

The door stood wide open, and Captain Godwin was first to enter. There was only one room in the hut, but there were two alcoves opening from it—narrow little alcoves in which, evidently, bedding and articles not wanted for immediate use were tucked away during the day.

As the Captain had stated, the apartment was in disorder. The mosquito wiring had been torn from the three windows and the door

and now lay in a tangle on the floor. Bamboo chairs had been broken, and there was a faint odor of whisky in the room. Major Ross glanced casually over the interior and turned away.

"I can't stop here now," he said impatiently. "I've got to write a report of this happening and get it to Manila. I suppose I can depend on one of your men to deliver a letter for me?" he added, turning to Captain Godwin.

"Yes, but it will mean a great delay," replied Godwin. "It will take at least a week for a man in a swift canoe to go to Manila and return here."

"It is unfortunate," grumbled the Major, "but I must, I suppose, endure the delay. Unless," he continued, a sudden smile coming to his face as he thought of the cozy club-life he had formerly enjoyed at Manila, "unless I go with the messenger and receive my instructions verbally."

"And in the meantime—"

Captain Godwin was about to protest against being left alone there under such tragic circumstances, but Ned caught his eyes and stopped him. He had no idea what the boy had in mind in checking his expression of regret at the proposed departure of the Major, but he liked the

appearance of the lad and closed his teeth on the words he was about to say.

"And in the meantime," he repeated, "we can look about for some traces of the missing man," the Captain completed the sentence.

"Exactly," replied the Major. "I regret exceedingly the peril of the situation so far as Lieutenant Rowe and his companions are concerned, and sincerely hope that they are all alive and not in serious trouble, but it appears to me that my place is at Manila at this time, and not here. We must start in on this remarkable case right, and I must confer with my superior officers."

"We can put in the time very well, looking up clues in the vicinity," said Ned. He wanted to handle the matter in his own way, knowing that while Major Ross might be an expert in military matters, he did not possess a particle of the detective instinct so necessary at that time.

"Yes," the Major replied, with his mind fixed on a few days of lazy routine at Manila, with all the comforts of civilization within reach of his hand, "yes, you may be able to accomplish a great deal in the way of discovering clues, and may even be able to locate the missing men—I have no idea that they have been murdered,

but understand this: You are not to take any important action without consulting with me."

"Of course not," Ned replied, chuckling in his sleeves at the thought of waiting in an emergency for instructions from Manila. "I hope we shall be able to report good progress upon your return. Shall you go in the launch?" he added, hoping with all his strength that the officer would not take the motor boat with him.

"Certainly," was the quick reply. "I must make progress, you know!"

Jimmie and Jack, who had followed their chum to the nipa hut, now entered and stood by the door. Ned saw them winking knowingly at each other when the Major spoke of going away in the motor boat, and decided to prod their inclinations a bit.

"I shall be sorry to have the *Manhattan* away just now," he said, "for we might use her to good advantage during your absence. However, there seems to be no other way."

Jimmie and Jack slid out of the doorway and down the oscillating bamboo stairs, and when, an hour later, the Major went to the little dock where the *Manhattan* lay he found the two boys working over her, sweating and complaining in loud voices against the inefficiency of modern

motor boat manufacturers. The Major went on with his preparations for departure, never doubting that the *Manhattan* would be ready for him in a few minutes. At last Jimmie turned an oil-smeared face toward Ned.

"No use," he exclaimed, "she won't go! The batteries are off and there's something wrong with the carbureter, and the spark-plug is twisted, and the delivery is all to the bad. Perhaps Major Ross can bring new parts down from Manila."

"Shut up, you dunce!" whispered Jack. "You'll give yourself away!"

Captain Godwin nudged Ned with an elbow and turned his laughing eyes away. He saw what the boys were doing, and rather approved of the idea of journeys among the islands in the motor boat during the Major's absence.

"Preposterous!" shouted the Major. "You must get the boat in shape to make the voyage to Manila! My mission will not endure delay. Captain Godwin, see what you can do with the boat."

Captain Godwin knew about as much of the running gear of a motor boat as did Jimmie, but he at once oiled up his hands and his face and tugged and pulled at the wheel, tapped on the

supply pipes, investigated the electric appliance, and finally announced that the boat was not in running order.

The Major blustered about for a few moments and then set forth on his mission in the canoe in which the party had landed.

"Perhaps," he said, at parting, "I may be able to catch a ship at Banglo, or whatever the name of that little pueblo is on the island to the west. In that case I shall return inside of ten days."

And so the Major went away, urging the rowers to greater exertions and wiping his red face with a red handkerchief. Then a strange thing happened. Jack drove Jimmie away from the *Manhattan*, asked Captain Godwin to bring him a wrench, and in ten minutes, or as soon as the canoe bearing the disgusted Major was conveniently around a bend, the boat was sailing about on the river like a bird in the sky.

Captain Godwin started to censure the boys for the deception they had practiced on the Major, but his severe words ended in a laugh.

"You helped!" Jimmie said, accusingly. "You knew what was up! Why didn't you tell him?"

"We'll discuss that later," was the smiling reply.

"Anyway," Jimmie said, "we're rid of the old bluffer, and may be able to do somethin', if he stays away long enough."

"You came near spoiling the whole thing," declared Jack, grinning at Jimmie. "You and your talk about twisted spark-plugs! You'd have been finding worn places in the spark next! You know about as much of a motor boat as a pig knows of the hobble skirt. Good thing the Major knows less about a boat than you do!"

"Why didn't he use the wire, instead of going off on that long journey?" asked Jimmie.

"The government can't lay cables to all these tiny islands," Captain Godwin replied, "but we are promised a wireless outfit before the season closes. Now, if you are ready," he added, turning to Ned, "we'll go back to the hut and make the examination suggested. I'm afraid there was a tragedy there last night."

"Are any of the people missing from the pueblo?" asked Ned, as the boat came to the dock and they all stepped ashore.

"Not a man missing," was the reply.

"Have you talked with the man who was sent to the hut to wait on the Lieutenant and his companions?"

"Only briefly," was the reply, "but he will

be at the hut when we get there. He is rather above the average native in intelligence, and may be able to throw some light on the mystery."

"Is he dependable?" asked Ned.

"I think so. He has been with me for a long time, ever since I came to this out-of-the-way jumping-off place."

"Well," Ned said, "you go back to the hut, if you will be so kind, and take the boys with you. I want to look about a little."

Captain Godwin hesitated, but Jack started away.

"Let Ned alone," he said. "He'll be giving us the shape of the aeroplane the Lieutenant and his men sailed away in before long!"

"He wants to consult the dream book," added Jimmie.

Frank Shaw, who had been sitting on the bridge deck of the *Manhattan* during this conversation, now sprang ashore and followed along after Ned.

"You ginks do a lot of talking!" he said. "Run along with the Captain and I'll take care of Ned."

Ned and Frank examined the ground around the pier and walked up and down the river bank for some distance. Save here and there where

the natives drew up their canoes, and where the women came down with the meager family washing, the bank on the pueblo side was covered with a growth of bushes except where the little pier ran out in front of the house with the tin roof.

Several times Frank saw his companion take out a rule and measure impressions he found in the soft earth under the thickets, and once he saw him put something he had picked up in his pocketbook. Knowing well the methods of his chum, Frank looked on with interest and maintained a discreet silence.

When the two reached the hut at last they found Captain Godwin and Jimmie and Jack sitting on the porch with a government map of the islands before them.

"That is just what I was thinking of," Ned said, taking a seat by their side. "I have yet to learn in what portion of the Philippines we are stopping."

"Strange the Major did not inform you as to that," Captain Godwin said.

"I have an idea that he knew very little of our future movements when we landed here," Ned said. "His instructions were unopened, remember, besides being a month or more old."

"I see," observed the Captain. "Well, you are on a little island of the Babuyan group, in the Balintang channel, north of the island of Luzon and southeast of the coast of China and Hong Kong. The transport sailed due west from Honolulu and to the north of Luzon. The nearest station of any size is Pata, on Luzon. The Major left without informing you as to his instructions?"

"Yes, he was in such haste to get away that he left us here without a word of information as to what we were to do. Rotten, don't you think?"

"He was in a hurry to get back to the soft side of military life at Manila," laughed the Captain. "Well, before you investigate the hut it may be well for me to give you some idea as to the situation. What I have to say may give direction to your search of the place."

"Everything is as when the discovery of the absence of the men was made, I hope," Ned said.

"Nothing has been touched," was the reply.

"Then go ahead with your story," Ned replied. "I have come a long way on speculation, and am anxious for something tangible."

"Some months ago," the Captain began, "it

was discovered that hostile influences—hostile to the United States Government—were at work among the outer islands of the Philippine group."

"I was told that much."

"Yes; well, investigation—and a crude and indifferent investigation it was—developed the fact that the tribes on some of the islands were forming an alliance against Uncle Sam."

"Now," said Ned, "you have come to the end of my information of the subject. What comes next?"

"At first little attention was given to the matter. Some of the native tribes are always in revolt, though the news of the battles and skirmishes are kept off the wires. Finally, however, it was learned that rifles were being received by the tribes belonging to this alliance."

"Then some nation alleged to be civilized must be at the bottom of the matter," Ned suggested. "I am anxious for you to come to that point."

"Well," hesitated the Captain, "I don't know what nation to suspect. It seems that no one does. I think that is the problem you were brought here to solve."

"It seems to me that the wise men at Washington ought to be able to secure information on the subject," Ned ventured.

"I half believe that the state department does know a lot about the matter," the Captain replied, "but does not see fit to act in the absence of conclusive proof."

"But how can a mess of Boy Scouts get the truth?" demanded Ned.

"By being Boy Scouts," was the smiling reply. "The launch was brought here for your convenience, and you are to go floating about among the islands north of Luzon, hunting, fishing, gathering specimens, and all that until you find out what sort of people it is that is doing this trading with the natives."

"That was the idea in the Canal Zone," laughed Ned, "but we had little hunting to do! It was quick action down there."

"And I hope it will be here," said the Captain. "Military detectives have been sent down here, but have gone back as ignorant as when they came, for the seasoned secret service man shows what his occupation is and betrays himself at the start. Now it is up to you. And you must go ahead without further instructions, for Lieutenant Rowe, who was to have posted you as to recent developments, is either dead or a prisoner in the hands of the plotters!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

There was silence on the unsteady porch of the nipa hut for some moments, and then Frank Shaw asked:

"Is there any proof at all that any government is trying to arm the native tribes against the United States?"

"If there is," the Captain replied, "I do not know of it."

"It may be simply a commercial conspiracy," said Jack.

"Go on!" exclaimed Jimmie. "If anybody should ask you about it, it is the Japs, or the Chinks!"

"When a play fails in New York, or a man jumps off one of the East River bridges, if you leave it to Jimmie, the Japs or the Chinks are at the bottom of it."

This from Jack, who ducked low to avoid a blow from the newsboy, and wandered off down the stairs leading to the porch.

"Yes," the Captain said, "it may be a conspiracy for the acquisition of wealth. I am not an anarchist, but it is my belief that there are

ILLUSTRATION No. 2

Boy Scouts in the Philippines; or, The Key to the Treaty Box.

many corporations in the world who would set the nations at each other's throats if a profit could be made out of it. But, after all, there is no need of guessing. You boys are here to find out what is going on, and you may now do it in your own way."

Ned left the Captain talking with Frank and Jimmie on the porch and went into the one room of the hut. Everything was in disorder there, as has been said, and Ned moved about cautiously in order that nothing might be disturbed. The Major and Captain Godwin, on their visit of the morning, had been careful to leave the place just as it had been on the discovery of the strange happening.

There was a rough table in the center of the room, and three bamboo chairs were overturned beside it. It was in front of one of the chairs that the spots of blood had been found. The light matting which had covered the floor here was torn and twisted, as if a heavy person had clung to it and had been dragged away by superior strength.

Under the edge of this piece of matting Ned found long scratches, as if shoe heels had slipped there and protruding nails had furrowed the floor. There were also various oblong papers

and numerous match ends. On the floor, under the rolling back of another chair, were the scattered remnants of a pack of playing cards. Mixed with these, and lying between the ace of clubs and the jack of diamonds, were half a dozen pieces of gilt paper, seemingly torn from an official seal.

In a corner of one of the alcoves, where it had been thrown or wafted by the fan which swung from the ceiling at the middle of the room, was a twisted piece of letter paper burned at one end. It seemed to the boy that the paper had been twisted in the form of a torch and lighted to give a more satisfactory illumination than that provided by the matches which had been burned. It was about half consumed.

After spending half an hour in the room Ned went back to the porch and sat down.

"What about it?" asked Frank.

"The mud is settling," laughed Ned.

"But not so the bottom can be seen?" asked Captain Godwin with a smile.

"Not yet," was the reply. "Perhaps a little talk with the servant who was sent here with Lieutenant Rowe last night might help to clear the case," he added.

Captain Godwin beckoned to a short, squatty Filipino who stood leaning against a tree not far away and the fellow advanced deferentially up the bamboo stairs, evidently much in awe of the Americanos.

"Tag," the Captain said to him, as he stood with one brown hand clinging to one of the roof supports, "this gentleman wants to ask you a few questions about what took place last night."

"Yes; I have been waiting."

The English was almost perfect, and the fellow's appreciation of the gravity of the situation was apparent. It was later explained to Ned that Tag, as he was called by the Captain, had been educated in an English school at Manila, and had lived in army circles nearly all his life until he had taken service with Captain Godwin.

"First," the Captain put in, "I want to say that it was not my fault that Lieutenant Rowe did not lodge in my own quarters last night. I proposed that to him, and he said that he had a great deal of work to do, should be moving about more or less during the night, might be detained here several weeks, and so preferred to set up a small establishment of his own.

This was the best that could be provided on a moment's notice."

"He was served with supper at your house?" asked Ned.

"Yes; and he was to have *desayuno* there this morning. That is, he was to have his first breakfast with me. Later he was to arrange for a table of his own."

"You came here with them?" asked Ned of the Filipino.

"I came on in advance to clear up the place."

"I see. Who came with you?"

"Two servants."

"Did they come into this room—the room occupied by the Lieutenant and his companions, I mean?"

"No; they were working the fan from the porch."

"Are those men in the place to-day?"

"Yes; but they know nothing."

"But they were to remain here during the night?"

"They did, but they slept."

"Drugged?"

"I don't know. From the complaints they have of their heads I suspect that they were."

"And you were to remain here during the night?"

"Yes, that was the understanding, but I was sent away about midnight."

"By whom?"

"By Lieutenant Rowe."

"Did he give any reason for sending you away?"

"He said they were going to bed and would not need me."

"And did they go to bed as soon as you left? You, of course, remained about the hut for a short time?"

"Yes, I remained about the hut for half an hour. They did not go to bed."

"What were they doing?"

"The Lieutenant was working over papers and the others were playing cards."

"Could you hear what they were talking about?"

"Yes, until the other man came."

Ned and the others bent forward with new interest. Here was a fresh feature in the case—a man who had not been referred to before coming into the hut about midnight.

"Who," asked Ned, "was this other man?"

"An Americano."

"Had you seen him about the place before?"

"Never. He came in the night and went in the night."

"Was he in uniform — the uniform of a soldier?"

"No; he wore citizen's clothes."

"Which way did he come from?"

"I don't know," was the surprising reply. "I first saw him when he was climbing in at the window."

"Climbing in at the window!" repeated Captain Godwin. "If he climbed in at the window when the others were awake, he must have been expected!"

"Yes; I should think so."

"I can't understand this at all!" exclaimed Captain Godwin, his good-natured face looking anxious. "Lieutenant Rowe said nothing to me about expecting company. And why should he conceal the fact from me? Why, indeed, should a visitor come crawling in at a window at midnight? Are you sure it wasn't one of the three men I conducted to the hut that you saw at the window?" he added, turning to the Filipino.

"Oh, yes; I am quite sure it was a fourth man. He mounted to the window-ledge on a ladder, pushed the screen aside and vaulted over the sill."

"And how was he received?" asked Ned.

"He was welcomed, and given a chair at the table. But first he went back to the window and made some sort of a signal to those waiting outside."

"Oh, so there were others waiting outside!" grated out the Captain. "Why didn't you come and tell me what was going on? Why didn't you tell me about this the first thing this morning? That is the trouble with these made-over men," he continued, half angrily as he looked at Ned. "You can teach them to do things by rote, but when an emergency comes they are like putty."

"I had no instructions to report what I saw at the hut—no orders to play the spy," answered Tag, indignant that his conduct should be criticized. "And this morning you gave me no chance to talk with you."

"How many people were there outside?" demanded the Captain.

"I don't know," was the reply. "There was the flash of a match to show that the signals from the hut were understood, and then I went to bed. There is no accounting for the freaks of these military Americanos, so I went to my bed. If I sat up at night taking note of

the movements of the soldiers sent here, I should get no rest at all, besides laughing myself sick over the foolishnesses of them."

Ned was watching the fellow with interest. He had no doubt that he was telling the truth about what he had seen there the previous night—that is, the truth so far as he went in the recital. Still, Ned did not trust the fellow. He believed that he had seen more than he had described, even if he had not been a party to what had taken place.

"What else did you see here last night?" he asked.

"Nothing—nothing at all."

"And you say you went to bed without satisfying your natural curiosity as to what you had seen?" roared the Captain. "I don't believe it! Buck up now, and tell us what was done after the fourth man entered the hut, or I'll send you to the military prison at Manila."

"I have told everything," said Tag with a sniffle. "You Americanos expect us to see everything and know everything! If we are so wise and capable, why don't you permit us to govern ourselves—send away your soldiers and let us handle the situation here?"

The Captain frowned and fumed about for

a moment, and Ned was afraid he would carry out his threat of placing the Filipino under arrest. This, he believed, would be about the worst move that could be made. Seeking to conciliate the fellow, he said:

"There is a great deal of sense in what you say, and I honor you for not playing the spy on the officers. Captain Godwin will not send you to prison, I am sure, as we need you here. For instance, we want the story of the men who worked the fan. Will you talk with them and tell us what they say?"

Tag hastened away, somewhat mollified, and Ned turned to the Captain.

"The fellow knows more than he pretends to," he said. "We must keep him here, and make him think that we trust him."

"I can talk with the fanmen myself," grunted the Captain, not very well pleased with Ned's interference. "I know the lingo."

"Of course," Ned replied, "but I want to know if Tag will tell us the same story, as coming from them, that they will tell you under a rigid cross-examination. In other words, I think Tag, as you call him, will shape their stories to suit his own purposes."

"And so you want to set a trap for him?

All right! Go ahead, lad, and make what you can out of this mess. What do you think those visitors came here for at midnight? And do you believe they are responsible for the disappearance of Lieutenant Rowe and his companions?"

"Here comes Tag," Ned said. "Suppose we wait and see what he says of the experiences of the fanmen."

The Filipino had in a measure recovered his good humor and was very respectful to the Captain. He addressed him instead of Ned when he spoke.

"They say they were given drink after the fourth man arrived and went to sleep."

"That accounts for the strange odor about the place!" cried the Captain. "Now, what the dickens does it all mean?"

"Cripes!" broke in Jimmie. "I wish I had as many dollars as times I don't know. Say, when we goin' to get a ride in the *Manhattan?* Me for the rollin' deep whenever you get this thing doped out."

"It looks like we had work cut out for us here," Ned replied. "Now, Captain," he went on, "it looks as if the late arrivals last night drugged the servants and took the secret service men away by main force."

"Main force!" roared the Captain. "Why didn't they shoot, or yell, or make some sort of a row that would have brought help? I've got a lot of old women here who could have stood off an attacking party! Force—nothing! Lieutenant Rowe was in the deal. He wanted to disappear with something he had in his possession, and he worked the abduction dodge."

"You may be right," the boy replied, "still, that does not change the fact that there were enough men about this hut last night to make just such a capture—with the assistance of a clever man on the inside—a man pretending to be friendly to the Lieutenant—say, for instance, the fourth man, or—Tag."

"How do you know how many men there were about here?" asked the Captain.

"If you will go to the river bank a few rods south of the pier," was the reply, "you will discover that a large canoe beached there last night. You will see that it was drawn far up into the thicket, a task which must have taxed the strength of at least eight men. Then, about the hut, and especially under the windows which the visitor entered, there are plenty of footprints."

"Footprints!" echoed the Captain. "My people don't wear footgear that leaves prints!"

"There were at least three pair of European shoes in the group," Ned went on. "Now, the next query is this: Why did the visitor enter by the window? If you will notice the floor in there, below the two front windows, you will see that the shades were drawn there last night, and that they were pulled down when this other wreck was produced and torn from the rollers."

"I hadn't noticed that," the Captain said.

"This shows that some one in this hut was expecting a visit, and also that the visit was to be kept a secret from you. The front windows overlook your quarters, and the window entered is the one most protected from view from your place. Now, this precaution may have been taken by the midnight visitor, coming here as a friend, or by an enemy, for the purpose of concealing from you what went on here."

"And that is why the Lieutenant did not sleep under my roof!" said the Captain. "He was expecting the fellow. Well, what do you say, did the fellow betray his confidence and bring enemies to carry him away?"

"His friend might have been followed here," Ned replied. "He might have been the person sought by the intruders. The next question is: Who was this visitor?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIGNALS IN GRASS.

Captain Godwin turned to the Filipino.

"Can you give us a description of him?" he asked.

Tag shook his head.

"I saw only his figure at the window," he said, "and only for an instant. He was assisted in, and then after a time, the lights were lowered, or extinguished entirely."

"So that is why you didn't loiter around!" cried the Captain. "You thought they had gone to bed! Are you sure you did not stop and listen to what was said?"

"I went to bed at once," was the sullen reply.

"Did you see them burning matches after the lights were out?" asked Ned.

"I could not see the interior of the hut from my bed," replied the Filipino, with flashing eyes.

"Well, don't get hot about it," advised the Captain. "Go on, Ned."

"The matches burned," Ned went on, "were not of the kind kept in stock here, the sort supplied by you to your guests. There is a difference in the shape and size of the stick. The

paper which I found in the alcove is part of an official letter dealing with the situation we came here to look into. It is more than half burned, so little can be learned from it."

"It is a wonder they didn't see that it was entirely destroyed," suggested Frank.

"It may be," Ned replied, "that they intended to burn the hut after their departure, and left the paper blazing."

"That is just about it!" cried the Captain.

"Then we have to take it for granted that the visitor came here with instructions for Lieutenant Rowe. Secret instructions, probably. He either betrayed his trust and assisted in what was done, or was followed here and attacked with the others. It is a great puzzle. One might ask a dozen questions without finding an answer. For instance: Why was the interior of the hut wrecked?"

"There was a fight, of course," Frank said.

"And not a shot fired!" cried the Captain. "I don't believe it! A fight would have led to shooting; shooting would have attracted attention. No, sir, you will find that Lieutenant Rowe stood in with this game! Why should official communications follow so closely on his heels? If the officials who sent him here had anything

to add to his orders, they might have sent a messenger on after him, of course, but there are no cables here, so he could not have been notified that the man was coming. Yet it is clear that he expected this man! Oh, he was in it, all right!"

"Did you size him up for that sort of a man?" asked Ned.

"I didn't see much of him," was the reply.

"You may be right," Ned said, "although I can't see why he came here at all if he was to make so sensational a disappearance."

"He wasn't thinking of disappearing when he came here," insisted the Captain. "Something in the instructions the fourth man brought changed his line of action. I'll bet my head on it!"

"Will you kindly talk with the two men who were put to sleep and see if they confirm the story told by Tag?"

The Captain agreed to this, and went away to look the men up. He was back in a few minutes with the report that the men were not to be found.

"They left just after talking with Tag," he added, looking angrily at the Filipino.

"They said nothing to me of going," Tag

hastened to say. "They certainly were not alarmed at what took place under their noses last night."

"Did they tell you who gave them the drink?" asked Ned.

"Yes; they said it was the fourth man."

"And there you are!" the Captain roared. "The fourth man! It is a wonder he didn't stick a knife into them!"

"How old were the men with the Lieutenant?" asked Ned. "You said they were young fellows."

"Well, they were tall and stoutish, but they looked young. Anywhere from sixteen to twenty, I should say."

"Did you notice a locked box in the party?"

"No; they carried nothing of the kind."

"They carried some baggage?"

"Yes; one suitcase. Came away in a hurry, they said. I saw the suitcase opened, on the table in there, and there was no box."

Ned took a thin, flat steel key from his pocket and held it out to the Captain. It was a key of peculiar construction, evidently made of individual pattern. In fact, it was such a key as usually goes with a strong cash box, having no duplicate.

"This was not used to open the suitcase?" he asked.

"Certainly not," was the reply. "Where did you find that?"

"On the river bank, where the canoe the men came in was beached," was the reply.

"Well," observed the Captain, "if we can't learn why they went away, or how, we may at least be able to discover where they went. Let us be about it."

"Unfortunately," Ned replied, "we can't track them through the waters of the channel. Water shows no footprints!"

"But they might not have gone away by water," insisted the other. "If they had, they would have taken the motor boat."

"They did send a man to get it," Ned replied, "but he couldn't operate it. That is why it was out of order this morning."

"How do you know that?"

"The man used matches there—the same kind of matches used in that room."

"Some day," laughed Jimmie, "some guy will come here an' move the bloomin' place away without bein' caught at it. Why didn't some one wake up?"

"I didn't wake up," said the Captain, "but

that is no proof that others did not. You can't trust these Filipinos. The people of the pueblo might have helped them away."

"Exactly!" said Ned.

"If they left in a canoe," Frank suggested, "we may be able to overtake them."

"In this maze of islands!" cried the Captain. "I should say not."

"We'll get a ride anyway," Jimmie observed.

"If you'll tell Jack to get the *Manhattan* ready," Ned said, "we'll take a run out toward that rough-looking bit of land over there toward the coast of China."

The boy darted away, and Ned directed the Captain's steps to the spot where the canoe had been beached. After inspecting the thickets into which the canoe had been drawn when taken from the water, the two, Ned in the lead, pressed through the tangle which lined the bank until they came to a clear space strewn with food tins which had the appearance of having been opened within a few hours.

"They waited here," he said, "and ate while they waited. I found the key here, and not at the point where the boat was pulled from the river. The box to which it belongs was opened here and new papers put into it. At least some

papers which it had contained were removed. They were burned one by one in that thicket ahead."

The Captain looked Ned over from head to foot and laughed.

"My boy," he said, "you surely know what your eyes were given to you for. Can you tell by looking at my coat how much money I have in the pocketbook in the breast pocket?"

"Hardly," laughed Ned, "but I can tell by looking at that light coat you have on that you went to sleep in your chair last night, with the lower part wrinkled up under you! Did you sleep that way all night? Own up, now!"

Captain Godwin blushed through his coat of tan like a schoolgirl.

"To tell you the truth," he said, "I did sleep in my clothes last night. After I left the Lieutenant at the hut I went home and mixed a little drink and sat down to read a bit. Well, sir, I fell asleep!"

"And woke up at daylight?" asked Ned.

"Pretty close to it," was the reply. "I awoke with a headache, too!"

"You mixed the drink yourself?" asked the boy.

"Yes; I always do."

"But your servant brought the glass?"

"Why, yes."

"Have you seen the servant to-day?"

"Sure! He got my early breakfast. We have two here, you know."

"Ever sleep like that before?"

"Not here."

Ned looked serious. This was something new. The Captain had without doubt been drugged, but who had contrived the thing?

"What are you getting at?" demanded Captain Godwin. "You don't think I was doped, do you?"

"Looks like it," was the reply.

"Then the whole native population is up to something!" shouted the Captain. "I've noticed a good deal of whispering lately. Do you think the tribe on the island has gone over to the insurrectos?"

"I don't know," Ned said, "but it seems to me that something is going to happen here before long."

"I'll watch out," declared the Captain.

"How long have you been in charge here?" asked the boy.

"Two years. There's really nothing to do, but Uncle Sam thinks he needs a man in charge

here, and pays pretty well, and so I've remained. It is a dull life, and I'm not certain that I don't enjoy this little excitement."

"Unless I am mistaken," Ned smiled, "it will not be so dull here in the future. I see trouble for the whole group."

"About a thousand of these brown leaders will have to be killed off before there will be any security of life or property here," said the Captain. "The natives would behave themselves if let alone."

"Now," Ned said, "you have been insisting all along that Lieutenant Rowe voluntarily left the island. Let us see about that."

"I never said he left the island. He may be here still, plotting with the natives, for all I know."

"You are mistaken there. Whether voluntarily or not, his party left the island last night, with the men who came here in the canoe."

"If he left the island, why didn't he go in the launch he came in? That would have been the most comfortable mode of leaving the place."

"Because, as has been said, the man who was sent to seize the motor boat could not make it move."

"How do you know that?"

"The fellow burned matches like those used in the hut as already stated, and threw the sticks about. He left the electric apparatus out of order, and that is why it would not run this morning when the Major wanted to use it."

"Originally that might have been the reason," laughed the Captain, "but I have an idea that the boys—"

"Never mind that!" Ned said. "We are not supposed to know anything about it. For if the Lieutenant had been a willing member of the party, wouldn't he have taken charge of the motor boat and got the party away in it?"

"Oh, all right! Have your own way about it!" smiled the Captain. "Let us suppose, solely for the sake of argument, that the Lieutenant was taken prisoner and went away against his will. Does that prove that he was taken from the island?"

"I was coming to that point," Ned replied.

He then called the attention of the Captain to the food tins which lay scattered about.

"These tins," he said, "have been opened within a few hours, which shows that the intruders rested and waited here and ate their suppers, perhaps their early breakfasts also. There were several of them, as you will see by the num-

ber of tins opened. The party embarked here. You can see where the nose of the canoe struck the mud."

"I reckon, as I remarked before," the Captain said, "that you don't need any instructions as to the use of your eyes! And the gray matter back of them seems to know what to do with the material unloaded on it! What next?"

"About the Lieutenant going away voluntarily," Ned went on. "Now step down here to the river bank. You notice the footprints in the mud, close to the water's edge?"

"Yes; they are plain enough."

"And some are heavy and some are light. See that? Some are faint impressions in the mushy soil, while some sink in a couple of inches. Some of the deep ones are clean cut, while others show that the foot wobbled in the track."

"There must have been a fat man who was unsteady on his feet," observed the Captain.

"Yes, there was a heavy man, but his tracks are cut sharply in the mud. His step was quick and firm. Now these other deep tracks show a staggering foot. What does that mean?"

"Blessed if I know!" cried the Captain.

"It means, to my mind, that the men who made these deep, wobbly tracks carried a burden

into the boat. What do you think that burden was?"

"You will be telling me next that it was a wounded man—perhaps the Lieutenant himself," said the Captain, his face alive with interest.

"It was a wounded man, all right," Ned replied, "but we have no means of knowing whether it was the Lieutenant. See, there are drops of blood close to the margin of the river!"

"You're a genius!" roared the Captain.

"Just observation," Ned said modestly. "There is nothing unusual about the faculty of seeing things. We all draw the same conclusions after the facts are pointed out. So, you see, there was a struggle in the hut, after all, and some one was cut with a knife, for there were no shots fired. As there would have been no fight if the Lieutenant had been in the game, as you express it, the inference is that he was taken prisoner."

"Granted—for the sake of argument!"

"Now," Ned continued, "you have seen Indian service, I understand, so you will no doubt recognize these signs in grass. Read them!"

"Sure I can read them," exclaimed the Captain, "but I never would have discovered them.

Indian signals in grass, eh? Now, who do you think put them there?"

At the edge of the thicket were two bunches of grass, each tied tightly at a point near the top. On one the grass stood straight up beyond the band. On the other the top was bent toward the river.

" 'Here is the trail,' " Captain Godwin read, pointing to the first one, "and the trail leads this way," he added, pointing to the other. "They left by the river!"

"There is one more," Ned said. "Read this," pointing to three bunches of grass, each tied near the top and standing in a row.

"That is a warning. It says, 'Be careful,' " read the other. "What does it mean?"

"Just what it says. It also means that there is a Boy Scout with the party!"

CHAPTER V.

ON THE RIM OF THE CHINA SEA.

The rain fell heavily, persistently, provokingly. Now and then came a crash of thunder which seemed to shake the earth; vivid lightning cut zigzags in the murky sky. The little islands of the Babuyan group in the Balintang channel seemed to rock in the arms of the storm.

The motor boat *Manhattan* lay tossing and drawing at her anchor in an obscure bay of tiny dimensions on the west coast of a small island which is a member of the Babuyan group and faces the China Sea. Ned, Frank, Jack and Jimmie sat sweating in the little cabin, which was in the back of the boat, the engine being located toward the center. The day was dark because of the clouds and the downpour of the rain, and the heavy foliage of the trees which came down to the very lip of the bay made it dim in the little cabin, but there was no artificial light.

The boys were waiting for the storm to subside. They knew the moods of the weather man of the Philippines well enough to understand that the rain was likely to continue for several

days, it being the opening of the rainy season, but they preferred not to face the initial tempest. In a few hours comparative quiet would come, and there would be only the steady fall of rain.

Since leaving the little island where the transport had landed them, they had visited three little dots of land in the channel, and on each one they had found signals in grass pointing to the north and west.

"That Boy Scout, whoever he is," Jimmie said, as they discussed the signals in the almost stifling atmosphere of the cabin, "is strictly next to his job! He's showing the way, all right!"

"I'll bet you a can of corn against a bite of canned pie that he's from New York," Jack Bosworth observed.

"Speaking of pie," Frank cut in, "there's a little restaurant on Beekman street where they serve hot pies at noon for a dime. You go in there at twelve and get a peach pie, and an apple pie, and a berry pie, hot out of the oven, and buy a piece of cheese, and go back to the office and consume your frugal repast. What?"

"If you talk about hot pie here," Jack said, threateningly, "I'll tip you out of the boat. Pie! When I go back to little old New York

I'm going to have mother meet me at the pier with a pie under each arm!"

"I won't take your bet, Jack," Jimmie said. "I'd lose. I know he's from New York, an' he belongs to the Wolf Patrol."

"I thought you left your dream book at home!" cried Frank.

"There was a boy named Pat Mack," Jimmie went on, "who enlisted and went to the Philippines a year ago. He was sixteen when he enlisted, but looked older, and so they let him in, he bein' a husky chap. He belonged to the Wolf Patrol, an' was a chum of Ned's. You remember him, Ned?"

"Pat Mack?" repeated Ned. "Who would ever forget him? Why, that red-headed Irishman is not a person to be forgotten, if once known. Why do you think he is with the party we are following, Jimmie?"

"Because Captain Godwin said one of the young men with the Lieutenant has hair so red that he didn't need a light to go to bed by. That's Pat Mack! And if he is with that bunch there'll be something doing before long. That boy will fight a rattlesnake an' give him the first bite."

"He is all to the good as a pugilist," Ned

said. "That was the trouble with him in New York. He was always in some kind of a mess because of his quick temper and his ready fists. I hope it is Pat who is leaving these signs."

"You bet it is," Jimmie insisted. "Say, look here! Who's rockin' this boat?"

The boys were all sitting quietly in their seats, but the *Manhattan* was rocking in a manner not accounted for by the storm. Motioning the others to remain where they were, Ned arose and passed out of the cabin.

The boat was still swaying violently, and Ned could at first see no good reason for it, but presently a commotion in the water, a commotion not caused by the wind and rain, caught his eyes and he advanced to the stern. After looking into the water for a moment he went to the cabin and beckoned to the boys.

"If you don't mind getting soaking wet," he said, "come out here."

"What is it?" asked Frank, lazily.

"Is it anything good to eat?" asked Jimmie.

Jack made no response but bounded forward and looked over the edge of the boat into the bay. What he saw was a great head with protruding jaws and a long, dark back covered with enormous half defined scales, like armor plate.

"What is it?" he asked, drawing a revolver from his pocket.

Ned pushed his hand back and the weapon was returned to a pocket.

"Don't shoot," he said. "We are not yet ready to announce our presence here."

"But what is that thing?" demanded Jack. "Is he trying to eat up the boat?"

"That is a crocodile," Ned replied. "Corker, eh?"

"Will he bite?" asked Jack, reaching for a boathook.

"Jump in and see," laughed Ned. "They live on fish, but eat dogs and men when they feel just right. The rivers and lakes of the Philippines swarm with them."

Jimmie and Frank now came out of the cabin and looked down at the crocodile.

"He's scratching his old nose on the boat!" Jimmie said. "That's what makes it rock so!"

"He thinks it's a sandwich, with meat inside," laughed Frank. "Suppose we give him a poke in the ribs?"

He reached forward with the boathook, which he took from Jack's hand, and jabbed at the creature, which did not appear to mind the pres-

ence of the boys at all, but continued his nosing of the boat.

"His hide is as tough as the crust of the pies Bridget used to make!" the boy said, jabbing harder than before and throwing his weight on the handle of the hook.

Just then the boat shunted to one side, the crocodile swished away, and Frank fell headlong into the agitated waters of the little bay. Jack saw him going and tried to catch him, but did not succeed.

The crocodile had turned away from the boat when Frank struck the water with a great splash, but he turned back and surveyed the submerged figure with some degree of interest.

Frank of course went down under the surface as he fell, and remained there for a second. When his body rose toward the surface the crocodile approached him. Jimmie and Jack drew their revolvers.

"Don't shoot!" commanded Ned.

"He'll eat Frank alive!" whispered Jimmie.

"He's making a grab for his leg now!" Jack added.

Frank came to the surface and struck out for the boat, which was only a few strokes away, the crocodile following in his wake, the giant

armor-plated body moving through the water stolidly and without visible means of motion. The rough back looked like a log which had lain long in the waters of a swamp and had caught rust from mineral deposits and a nasty brown from decaying vegetation.

Frank knew the danger he was in, but did not seem to understand that the boys on the boat were aware of his peril, for he swung his body out of the water and whirling, pointed to the crocodile. As he did so the monster speeded forward and snapped at his arm.

"Shoot! Shoot!" cried Jimmie.

But no shots were fired. When the great mouth of the monster opened something shot out from the boat and landed squarely between the extended jaws of the crocodile. There was a snap, a crunching sound, then the water was whipped into commotion by the writhing body of the monster.

A rope was thrown to Frank and he was soon on board, not much wetter than his chums, standing in the driving rain, and not at all injured by his adventure.

"Cripes!" Jimmie cried, as Frank stood panting by his side, "I thought he had you where the whale had Jonah."

"What was that you fed him?" asked Frank of Ned.

"Just a bottle of gasoline which lay here," was the reply.

"You couldn't make a throw like that again in a hundred years!" Frank said.

"If you're goin' to feed gasoline to the crocodiles," grinned Jimmie, "I'll notify the government."

"If the breed listens to what that fellow has to say of gasoline as an article of food," Ned laughed, "there won't be much demand for it."

"He'd have had my arm if you hadn't hit the mark," Frank said. "I'll owe you an arm as long as I live, old man!"

"And that big fish owes Uncle Sam a quart of gasoline and a good blue glass bottle," laughed Jack. "I wonder how it will set on his tummy?"

"Now," Ned said, "I'm as wet as it is possible to get, so I'm going on shore to see if our Boy Scout left any mail for us. I'm getting anxious to catch up with the Lieutenant and his abductors."

"I'm goin' too!" said Jimmie.

"You're not," Ned replied. "I'm not going to the trouble of keeping track of you in that wilderness."

"All right!" Jimmie grunted, apparently resigned to his fate, but when Ned rowed ashore and disappeared in the thicket which skirted the bay the little fellow recklessly slipped into the water and came out unharmed on the beach farther to the south than Ned had landed. He stood for a moment with the salt water running out of his hair and over his freckled face, made an amusing grimace at the boys in the boat, and scurried into the jungle.

"The little dunce!" Jack exclaimed.

"If he keeps close to Ned he will be all right," Frank observed, "but if he goes to wandering about on his own account he will get into trouble. I've got a hunch that the people we are following are on that island."

In five minutes Ned made his appearance, rowing swiftly out to the boat.

"They are there!" he exclaimed. "I found the trail mark and the direction. A yard from the last direction I found the triple warning three times repeated. You know what that means?"

"Life or death," was the reply, and the three boys stood looking into each other's faces for a moment without speaking.

"I guess they're going to murder the prisoners," Jack said, presently, breaking the painful silence.

"That is what the sign seems to read," Ned said, gravely.

"Then we may as well be getting out our guns," Frank said.

Ned nodded, and turned toward the shore again. In a moment he faced his chums again, his eyes startled and anxious.

"Where's Jimmie?" he asked.

"He went ashore!"

"Didn't you see him?"

Ned turned from Frank to Jack and then pointed toward an elevation toward the center of the island.

The clouds hung low and the rain was still falling in torrents, but under the gray sky and through the downpour of the rain two columns of smoke lifted an eloquent voice.

"That's a Boy Scout call!" exclaimed Jack.

"Two columns of smoke," Frank said, "mean 'Help'! Jimmie couldn't have kindled two fires since he has been gone, could he?"

"Of course not," Jack replied. "That's Pat Mack, the red-headed rascal!"

"I bet he wishes he was back on Chatham Square!" observed Frank.

The boys waited ten minutes, but Jimmie did not make his appearance.

"He's in trouble!" cried Frank. "We better go and see what kind of a fix he's gotten into."

"It may be," Ned said, after a short pause, "that he has seen the call for help, and is making his way in that direction."

"That is just like him!" Jack burst out.

"Are we going in there after him?" Frank asked.

"We are likely to lose him in the thicket if we go," Ned cautioned, "and it seems to me that we ought to wait a short time. He is wise enough not to go butting into a camp."

"What sort of a place is it in there?" asked Jack.

"It is one of the nameless islands of the Babuyan group," Ned answered. "Like most of the others, it is of volcanic formation. There is a central elevation, and a stream of good size starts up there somewhere and runs into a bay farther north. I was thinking of speeding up and trying to get into the interior by way of the river."

"With the engine barking like a terrier in a rat pit!" said Frank.

"For once," said Ned, with a smile, "you have said a good thing! We've got to lie here and wait until dark. Then we can advance through the jungle and look for their campfire."

"Perhaps they won't build a fire."

This from Frank, who was stuffing his pockets with cartridges.

"Of course they will!" Jack put in. "They will have to keep the wildcats away."

"Wildcats!" laughed Frank. "There isn't a wildcat within a thousand miles of this island."

"Don't you ever think it," Jack insisted. "There are plenty of wildcats in the Philippines, and snakes, and lizards. In fact, the islands are not unlike the Isthmus of Panama in this regard. And monkeys! Well, we've heard enough chattering already to put us wise to them."

As the boy spoke a great chattering broke out in a thicket only a few rods away from the beach. The monkeys seemed frightened, and moving toward the shore.

"Jimmie is in there!" Ned exclaimed. "I wish I could chloroform the little pests. They will betray the presence of the lad."

While the boys waited, wondering what was to be the outcome of the dangerous situation, the sharp whistle of a launch came from the opposite side of the island. The first blast was followed by three others, in quick succession, and then a shot was heard from the interior.

"This must be receiving day for the little brown men!" said Jack. "There's a boat over there talking to them. What about it, Ned?"

"If you boys will promise not to leave the boat," Ned said, "I'll go ashore and try to find out what is going on. This island lies on the rim of the China Sea, and that boat may be from the land of the Celestials!"

"Bringing arms to put Uncle Sam to the bad!" exclaimed Frank. "I'd like to pull their pigtails!"

The boys promised not to leave the *Manhattan*, and Ned rowed ashore and struck into the jungle. There was now an uproar of chattering all over the island, it seemed, and he walked swiftly under cover of the racket. In half an hour he was on an elevation which gave him a view of the China Sea. What he saw caused him to drop suddenly to the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOW CALL OF A WOLF.

When Jimmie left the *Manhattan* he thought it would be perfectly easy to follow Ned into the jungle. Before leaving Captain Godwin's charge the boys had been provided with bolos, and the youngster slipped one under his jacket before leaving the motor boat. This he used to good purpose, though with great caution, as he crept through the thickets.

As is well known, it is almost impossible to make headway in a Philippine forest without chopping down creepers and tangled vines. The bolo is always in use by parties hunting or exploring. It is a short, heavy sword, or knife, similar to the machete of Cuba, and is frequently used in warfare. In the hands of an expert it becomes a very effective weapon.

Gaining the thicket, Jimmie stood still and listened for some indication of the presence of his patrol leader. But the patter of the rain, the rustling of the great leaves, the scolding of the wet and alarmed monkeys in the trees about him, served to shut out any other sounds.

He walked as fast as he could through the

jungle toward the center of the island, or in the direction which he believed to be the center. Always his way was uphill, and now and then he was obliged to draw himself up some acclivity by pulling, hand over hand, on a creeper trailing from a tree.

Certain that he could find his way back, he did not blaze the way. Here and there he hewed down a thorny limb which tore at his clothes, or cut a creeper from a tree, but he made no effort to mark his path.

Occasionally he came to a little glade, a space clear of trees but hemmed in by the eternal jungle just the same. Here the way was choked with rank cogon grass, growing from eight to twelve feet high. He found this as mean a growth to pass through as any briar patch or cane-brake.

Cogon grass seems a useless parasite on the bosom of old Mother Earth, and yet it presents a compensation in its gorgeous white bloom, for, like the poppy, the cogon is a show-piece of nature, and she flaunts it in places where beauty is needed, too. Jimmie had never seen a field of buckwheat in blossom, or he might have compared the cogon stretches to fields in the United States at certain seasons of the year.

Even in his haste, in the uncomfortable day, the boy stopped to gaze in wonder at the wonderful balete tree, which is a representative of the fig family. This tree begins life as a parasite, at least it springs to life in a crotch of some other tree. Here it thrives on the humus and decayed vegetable matter and sends long, winding tendrils down to the ground.

These tendrils take root and grow with such vigor that the supporting trunk is rapidly enveloped in a coalescing mass of stems, while its own branches are overtopped by the usurper, which kills it eventually as much by stealing its sunshine as by appropriating the soil at its base. When very old these trees possess a massive trunk, usually, with a large cavity in the middle where the trunk of the other tree rotted out. Some of the younger trees, however, seem to stand on stilts.

Jimmie saw many things to marvel at, for a Philippine forest is not at all like a forest in the states of New York or Illinois. In the glades he saw plants of enormous size, with leaves seven feet long. He came upon rattan or bejuco thickets, where thorns, pointing down the stems like barbs on a fish-hook, snatched at his clothes and clung to them too.

A variety of this plant has a stem, trailing on the ground, five hundred feet long. This stem is hollow and divided into compartments by diaphragms at the joints, like the bamboo. Each compartment contains about a mouthful of pure water.

Jimmie climbed upward for half an hour, thinking every moment that he would come upon some trace of Ned, but Ned, as the reader knows, was at that time waiting in the cabin of the *Manhattan* for the return of his friend. Unconsciously he wandered off to the right, or north, and presently came to an elevation from which he could overlook the rain-splashed waters of the China Sea.

By the time he reached this position Ned was also in the forest, hoping to meet Jimmie as well as to learn the meaning of the signals from the unknown launch and the firing on the island. Ned, however, for a long time kept to the left, and when at last he came to an elevation he was at least a mile away from that to which Jimmie had ascended.

From the hill—it could not be termed a mountain, though it was of volcanic formation—Jimmie looked into a glade from which the smoke of a fire ascended. He would have observed

the two columns of smoke which had been seen from the motor boat had he reached the position earlier, or if he had not been surrounded by the thicket when the Boy Scout signal rose to the sky.

He could see people moving about the fire, which was partially protected from the storm by a heavy canvas on the windward side. A crude shelter composed of great leaves and canvas was also seen, and in this he thought he saw several reclining figures. By this time the boy had given up all hope of coming upon Ned, and also of finding his way back to the *Manhattan* without a careful study of the location.

From the place where he stood he could look over a large portion of the island. He could see a river running to the east, and wondered if the bay in which the motor boat was lay not near the mouth of the stream. Still, there were many indentations in the shores of the little isle; he could not discover the *Manhattan* in any of them.

He studied over the situation for a time and then arrived at the conclusion that he could best find his way back to the boat by following the line of the coast. That, however, necessitated a long journey and, perhaps, the swimming of streams which would doubtless take him far

into the night, and a Philippine jungle is no place to travel in the darkness. Besides being decidedly uncomfortable, such a trip would be dangerous. Even if there were no wildcats on the island, there were plenty of reptiles. Then he caught sight of a launch off to the east and changed his plans.

His idea was to circle the camp and gain a position between it and the place where the launch had made its appearance. If the people on the boat were planning to land he wanted to see them before they reached the camp. If they were enemies he thought he could avoid them readily enough; if they were friends they might assist him in releasing the prisoners.

"Of course they're in with the game that's goin' on, though," he mused, as he made his way around the hill. "If they wasn't, what would they be comin' to the island for? There's no one here to visit—or wouldn't be if this party of dagoes hadn't landed. The men in the launch are here to meet the others, and that's all there is to it. I'm goin' to see what their business is!"

It was growing dim over the forest when Jimmie gained the position he sought, and there were lights in the launch down in a little bay and lights in the camp halfway up the hill. The

rain still came down heavily, driven with considerable force by the wind, and the boy was, of course, soaked to the skin and suffering from the stings of the insects which swarm in Philippine forests, but still he waited patiently for some signs of communication between the people on the boat and those in the camp.

There was no stir in the thicket which lay between the two, and Jimmie concluded that he had arrived too late to witness the meeting of the two parties. The next thing to do was to get as close to the camp as he could without danger of detection and observe what was taking place there. It might be even possible, he thought, to get near enough to hear something of the conversation.

With this object in view he moved as stealthily as possible through the jungle, up the hill, toward the fire, shining dimly in the rain. Much to his surprise he found no guards posted about the camp. When fifty yards away, concealed from any possible view of those about the fire by a mass of creepers, he saw that the inhabitants of the camp were hustling about in the work of building a good-sized shelter of the huge leaves which grew about. The reclining forms in the shelter he had first seen were now only partly in sight.

"They are tryin' to keep the prisoners drv. anyway," the boy thought.

The shelter last spoken of was at the right of the fire, and Jimmie circled off so as to reach it from the rear, his purpose being to learn if the persons lying there were really the men who had been carried away from the island where Captain Godwin had his headquarters.

Presently he came upon a group of four people, standing, somewhat protected from the storm, under a great tree. He drew as close as he dared, even risking discovery, and listened. He could hear voices above the wailing of the wind and the patter of the rain, but could not understand what was being said. The conversation was being carried on in a tongue with which he was unfamiliar.

"Three of them are Chinks," he mused, when, in moving about, the men came between his line of vision and the slow flame of the fire. "They wear their shirts outside their trousers and have their hair done up like the Chinese in Pell street!"

Directly the fourth man of the party, who seemed to be an American, or, at least, an Englishman, asked:

"And the treaty? Will they sign?"

The others nodded and chattered away in their own tongue.

"When will they be here?" he then asked.

More chattering followed, and then the four hastened to the shelter which was being constructed. Jimmie gathered from the two questions he had heard that the island had been chosen as a meeting place, and that the shelter was being built for the accommodation of those expected.

He had heard something of the purpose of the government in sending Ned to the Philippines, and remembered now that there had been talk of a possible organization of the native tribes against the United States government. Now he suspected that the chiefs were to meet there to execute the treaty which was to tie the tribes together and bring about an armed revolt against American occupancy.

"It looks to me," he thought, "like the Chinese were at the bottom of the trouble. I guess China would like to get a foothold here!"

There was nothing more to be learned from the position he occupied, and so he moved on, always keeping to the right of the campfire, blazing dimly in the rain and requiring constant care, until he came out in a thicket close to the

rear of the shelter where the men he believed to be prisoners lay. In five minutes he was at the canvas wall of the refuge, listening.

All was still inside, and it was evident that the conspirators did not suspect that they had been followed to their retreat. Looking about, he saw that most of the men of the party were still busily engaged in constructing the shelter and that no one was near the place he wished to investigate, so he cautiously lifted a corner of the canvas and looked inside.

The men there were four in number, and all seemed to be bound hand and foot! The captors were not taking any chances on escape, although they evidently believed themselves to be in full possession of the little island. All was still inside the shelter except that the rain descended steadily on the leaf roof and now and then a low moan came from the front of the place.

"That must be the man they cut up," thought the boy. "I wonder if it is Lieutenant Rowe who is wounded?"

While the boy waited, uncertain what course to pursue, another signal came from the shore and was answered by another pistol shot.

"Another bunch of Chinks!" he thought.

ILLUSTRATION No. 3

Boy Scouts in the Philippines; or, The Key to the Treaty Box.

The signals brought considerable excitement to the camp, and Jimmie concluded that the new arrival must be a person of some importance. In a short time nearly every person in the camp rushed away down the hill toward the bay where the first launch was anchored, as if to welcome the new arrivals.

"Now's my time!" thought the boy, and in an instant his inquisitive head was thrust under the canvas, and then the low, snarling call of a wolf penetrated the shadowy place where the men he believed to be prisoners lay.

The effect of the signal was instantaneous. A figure half arose and dropped back again, only to roll over and over in the direction from which had come the Boy Scout signal used by all members of the Wolf Patrol. As the bound figure came awkwardly rolling on, Jimmie saw, with what joy may be readily understood, a red head shining in the firelight! Never in all his life had any color looked so good to Jimmie as that brilliant red did at that time!

"Pat Mack?" he whispered.

The figure wiggled and twisted vigorously, but there was no verbal reply.

"I'll bet dollars to doughnuts they've put a stick in his mouth," said Jimmie, and this whis-

pered observation was answered by another muscular demonstration.

"Sure," muttered the boy, "it is Pat an' he's tryin' to talk to me with his feet, an' them tied up plenty!"

Bolo in hand he crept into the shelter, although the sound of voices told him that the people who had gone down the hill were now returning. He could not see the cords which held the still struggling man, but he found them with his fingers and cut them, not quite certain that he was serving a friend, but willing, under the circumstances, to take the risk. First the cords which held the feet were severed, then those which held the wooden gag in place, then that which confined the hands.

When this last cord was cut two muscular arms flew up and seized the boy about the neck, drawing his head down until his nose was buried in the wet clothes of the man he had released.

"Let up!" he muttered in a smothered voice.

Still the powerful arms drew him down, and the boy was beginning to wonder if he had not better use his bolo when a voice whispered:

"Jimmie! Is it dead we both are?"

"We will soon be if you don't let up!" answered Jimmie.

"Jimmie from the Bowery?" demanded the other.

"Sure!" was the reply. "What is this, anyway, a catch-as-catch-can? If you don't let up I'll take a rib out with my bolo."

With a spring which almost keeled the boy over the figure sprang up, ducked under the dripping canvas, and crouched in the thicket from which Jimmie had observed the tent. Jimmie's first thought was to follow, then he thought of the remaining prisoners and turned to cut their bonds.

But he was too late. As he turned three men came to the front of the shelter and bent low for the purpose of entering. To have hesitated longer would have been to invite capture, and so, with a sigh of regret, the boy shot under the canvas and joined the other in the thicket.

"It's leg bail for it!" came the familiar voice of Pat Mack, and the boys poked their faces into the thicket and kept going, regardless of the thorns and creepers which tore at their garments and tripped their feet. It was so dark now that they could not see a hand held two inches from their eyes, but they kept on, making as little noise as possible.

CHAPTER VII.

A MISSING MOTOR BOAT.

"You rapscallion," Pat Mack whispered, as the two came together in the embrace of a particularly tough creeper, "how did you ever get here? I saw you last on the good old Bowery!"

"I didn't fly over," replied Jimmie. "Here," he added, "take this bolo an' cut that rope! What did you mean by chokin' me when I cut you loose?"

"A hug of affection!" retorted the other. "You looked like an angel to me! Did you flutter down from the sky in the rain?"

"I ought to give you a good punch for it!" Jimmie replied. "You near took the hide off me beautiful nose! Have you got that bloomin' steel cable cut? Seems to me they are comin' after us!"

The boys stood perfectly still and listened. Above the patter of the rain, above the murmur of the trees, above the chattering of the aroused monkeys, came the crash of heavy bodies through the bushes, the sound of human voices.

"Sure they are!" whispered Pat, and they set off again.

Working their way painfully through the jungle, falling now and then over long vines, coming into contact with great trees and swinging parasites which brushed against their faces like snakes, the boys pressed on as rapidly as possible, but ever the sounds of pursuit came closer! The pursuers were more familiar with jungle methods than they, and no pretense of secrecy was made.

"Have you got a gun?" whispered Jimmie.

"I haven't even got a toothpick," was the reply.

"We'll have to fight before long," Jimmie said, panting with the exertion of the unfamiliar struggle with the jungle.

"There's plenty of hollow trees about," suggested Pat. "Why not hide in one of them until they pass?"

The suggestion seemed a good one, for a moment. Then the uselessness of such an effort at concealment became apparent. With sinking hearts the boys heard the low whine of a hound!

"I wonder how they managed to track us so easily," Jimmie said.

"Give me the bolo," Pat said. "I'll split

the dog's head open if he comes near us. Use your gun on the men."

The boys did not give up hope of final escape, but pressed on for a time. However, the acclivity they were ascending grew steeper as they advanced, and they were obliged to stop now and then to rest. On one of these occasions they heard a commotion in the jungle just ahead of them. This was disheartening!

"They've flanked us!" whispered Pat.

The pursuers were carrying a torch which, in the rain, gave a dim light, but still served to direct their steps, and the glow of the flame now reached to the very spot where the lads stood. The bushes behind them parted and the glowing eyes of the hound looked up in their faces. Then the call of the beast told the men following that he had at last sighted his prey.

The boys turned to flee again, but came up against an almost perpendicular wall of rock. The pursuers saw them now and came on with cries of victory.

"Guess they've got us!" Pat said.

"Not yet!" Jimmie answered.

But, however courageous the lads might have proved themselves to be, they would have been taken in a moment had they not received

unexpected assistance. The hound was almost at their feet when a shot was heard and the great beast fell to the ground, struggled for an instant, and lay still.

Another shot followed the first instantly, and the torch dropped from the uplifted hand of the evil-faced man who was carrying it in the lead. An intense, uncanny darkness followed the extinction of the torch, and the two boys took advantage of it to edge around the face of the rock which had blocked their progress. Without the help of the dog, and without the torch, the pursuers could do little, and stood on equal terms with the pursued.

It was impossible, of course, for the boys to make their way through the jungle without making any noise, and in a moment the pursuing party showed its temper by firing revengeful shots at the spots from which the sounds of their progress proceeded. After half a dozen bullets had clipped the bushes about the heads of the lads two shots came from in front, the lead whizzing over their heads. A sharp cry of distress was heard in the rear at the second shot, and then all was still.

The boys crouched in the open space between the "legs" of a balete tree and waited for some

possible explanation of the strange thing that had taken place. Who had killed the hound, and who was it that was shooting at the enemy over their heads? These questions were hard to answer.

"It is one of the boys from the *Manhattan*," Jimmie concluded, at last.

"Then why don't he show up?" demanded Pat. "Who is in the *Manhattan*?"

"Ned Nestor and two members of the Black Bear Patrol," was the reply. "We came over here to sleuth."

"To what?"

"To sleuth. To do the Sherlock Holmes stunt. To put down an insurrection in the Philippines!"

"You seem to be putting it down," Pat said, in a sarcastic tone.

"We've got it by the neck!" insisted Jimmie.

"Ned's being along will help some," said Pat. "He's the boy to get to the bottom of a tough case. If he's on this side of the world, that's him in the shrubbery just ahead. Did you hear the signals a short time ago?"

"Of course."

"Well, that's the bunch coming."

"What bunch?" demanded Jimmie.

"Why, the Chinks, of course."

"What they coming here for?"

"I guess they expect to take the Philippines home with 'em," was the reply. "Anyway, they're plotting to take Uncle Sam down and search him for them."

"Did you hear much of their talk?" asked Jimmie.

"Quite a little, but Lieutenant Rowe made so much noise I couldn't hear all that was said when they were near me. He's badly wounded."

"I'd like to know just what took place at the hut Captain Godwin put you fellows in night before last," Jimmie said.

"There's treachery somewhere," began Pat, but just then a sound reached their ears which drove all thoughts of that other night from their minds. It was the low, snarling call of a wolf!

"That's Ned!" whispered Jimmie.

"It's a Wolf, anyway," Pat exclaimed, losing caution in the excitement of the moment. "That will help some!"

The boy's voice must have been heard above the rain and the swishing of the tropical growth, for several shots came from the rear, and one of the bullets cut into the tree near Pat's head.

"They seem to be gettin' the range!" Pat

said, scratching his head and blessing his lucky star that a bullet had not connected with it.

"They couldn't hit a flock of bridges!" said Jimmie, disdainfully.

Then he straightened up and gave out a long, shrill cry, like that of a wolf calling to the pack. Pat caught him by the arm and drew him back into the semi-shelter of the "legs" of the balete tree.

"You'll have a spray of lead flying this way in a second!" he said. "Can't you give the Wolf call without alarming the people of Hong Kong, six hundred miles away?"

"I'm celebratin'!" answered the boy.

Again the wolf cry echoed through the forest, and this time it was answered from within a few feet of where the boys stood. There were no shots this time, and it was concluded that the pursuers had returned to the camp.

"Ned!" called Jimmie.

"Hey, there!" added Pat.

"That voice sounds like Chatham Square!" said a voice close to the boy's elbow, and in the darkness two hands fumbled together and clasped in a hearty greeting.

"What you followin' me about for?" de-

manded Jimmie, as the three started on through the jungle again.

"You've got your nerve!" said Pat. "Only for the darkness I'd hand you one for that. What's he following you for? If he hadn't followed you, both of us would have been captured back there."

"Hereafter," Ned said, "when Jimmie goes into the woods I'm going to tie a string to him, so he can be pulled back home."

"Huh!" snickered Pat, "they tied plenty of strings to me, but they didn't pull me back home!"

It was so still in the rear, for all of any sounds of pursuit, that the boys decided that their enemies had given up the search for them, so they walked faster and soon came out on the elevation which Ned had mounted on leaving the *Manhattan* in the afternoon. The rain ceased gradually, and a fugitive moon was seen now and then among the hurrying clouds.

With the first show of light Ned looked Pat Mack over with interest. The Irish lad returned the friendly glance with interest, and the two again clasped hands.

"We didn't anticipate such a meeting," Ned said.

"You knew I had gone to the Philippines," Pat said, "but I had no idea you would ever wander off here. Tell me about it."

The story was soon told, in condensed form, and then Ned asked:

"That was Lieutenant Rowe who was captured?"

"Sure! They got into our hut and geezled us good. I shall not be able to straighten out my arms for a month."

"Your hands must have been free when you left those signs in the grass," said the patrol leader.

"They caught me doing it," said Pat, "and that is why I was tied up tighter than the others."

"Well, you did a good job before they caught you," Jimmie said. "When you goin' back to let the others loose?"

"Lieutenant Rowe is in great pain because of his wound," Pat replied, "and we ought to do something for him soon."

"Where is the fourth man—the fellow who climbed in the window?" asked Ned in a moment.

"Say!" Pat answered, "there was something strange about that! He came in with new instructions—instructions which would have sent

us off to Manila again, and the Lieutenant wouldn't stand for them, and so—"

"They had a scrap?" asked Jimmie.

"Did the Lieutenant doubt the authenticity of the instructions?" asked Ned.

"I think he did," was the reply, "and so did the messenger! Odd, eh?"

"But he must have been expecting the messenger," Ned went on, "for the screen at the window where he entered was left unfastened for him."

"He was expecting some one," answered Pat, "but of course he did not know who it would be. Anyway, he was not anticipating faked instructions."

"But why was he so secret about letting the fellow in? Why wasn't the door used when he came?"

"I don't know. The messenger the Lieutenant was expecting was to come secretly and go secretly. That's all I know about it."

"He was to be sent by the government officers?"

"Of course."

"From what point?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Pat. "It is all a muddle. I can't understand how a man

could follow us with instructions, anyway. We came fast in the motor boat, and could not have been followed in a canoe. I don't know where this messenger was to spring from, I'm sure. Anyhow, the wrong one came, or the right one brought the wrong dispatches, and Lieutenant Rowe wouldn't stand for it, and there was a conference, and then the brown men came in and we were geezled. Looked like a raid on a pool room in little old New York!"

"But this false messenger—the wrong man, or the right man with the wrong instructions—was captured also?"

"Yes, he was; and he made a row about it. I'll tell you what I think. There's treachery in the secret service somewhere. Some interest or some nation is trying to take the Philippines away from Uncle Sam."

"And receiving assistance from those in the employ of Uncle Sam!" Ned said, musingly. "Well, I'm here to see what can be done in the line of locking the traitors up in a nice hot cell at Manila."

"You needn't look much farther," Jimmie said. "There's a second motor boat out in a bay west of the island, and I'm tellin' you that it came across from China. It is the washee-

washee people who are kicking up this mess, all right."

"You seem to have solved the mystery," laughed Ned. "From the first we have known that there was a conspiracy against Uncle Sam, but the question has always been 'Who?' and not 'What for?' The purpose of the alleged treaty has never been a mystery. What we are here for is to catch the conspirators with the goods, as Inspector Byrnes used to say. And now you've solved the puzzle!"

"Quit yer kiddin'!" exclaimed Jimmie. "I can say what I think, can't I? Besides, if it ain't the Chinks, who is it?"

"That is just what we want to know," Ned replied, more soberly. "There is a notion at Washington that it may be some financial interest. The newspapers were saying, when we left civilization, that a certain monopoly was financing the Mexican revolution, and there is a suspicion that some disloyal men in the United States are doing the same with the ignorant natives of the Philippines—urging them on and supplying them with guns and ammunition."

"Well," Pat observed, "whoever it is that is doing the business, there are traitors in the secret service department. The Americans who

acted with the Filipinos who captured us are posted as to what is going on at Washington, all right."

"Let's go and get them," suggested Jimmie. "I guess the third degree would make them tell all about it!"

"Yes," suggested Pat, "you run out and get them while we find the *Manhattan!* That will be a nice little job for you!"

"I wouldn't let them tie me up, anyway," growled Jimmie, annoyed at the chaffing of his friends. "Say!" he added, "here's our little bay now, but where is that bloomin' motor boat? Some one's come and carried it away while we've been in the woods, an' took Jack and Frank away with it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WIGWAGS FROM THE BEACH.

For a long time after the departure of Ned, Jack and Frank sat in the cabin of the *Manhattan,* looking out on the steady downpour. They were not quite satisfied with their share in the activities of the day. Instead of being housed in the cabin, they preferred an exciting hunt even in the rain, over the hills of the little island in view.

"If we stand for it," grumbled Jack, "we'll have to spend most of our time keeping house! Jimmie will scatter himself all over the Asiatic division of the map, and Ned will spend most of his time looking him up!"

Frank laughed at this outbreak of ill humor, although he was as anxious as his chum to be on the firing line.

"I wish we'd not taken the *Manhattan,*" Jack continued. "I'm the only one in the party that can operate it, and I'll be tied down like a galley slave!"

"Go it!" laughed Frank. "Growl your head off, if you want to, Mr. Black Bear! Instead of

snarling, why don't you tell me what makes the boat go when you do something to the wheel and that switch?"

"I thought you owned a launch?" said Jack.

"Father bought me one," was the reply, "but I've never learned how to run it. I'm too fat to bother my head about such things!"

"Then what are you asking me about the mechanism of the thing for?" asked Jack. "If you don't want to know, what's the use of my telling you how to run a motor boat? You make me weary!"

"If I had a nice little temper like yours," Frank grinned, "I'd go and bump my head against a tree! Come, old man, tell me about the boat. I may want to run it some time, after you get caught by a cat or filled full of poisoned arrows! Come! honest! What makes it go?"

"And you don't even know the action of a gasoline engine?" exclaimed Jack, in better humor. "Well, I'll tell you. A jet of gasoline, which is thinner than water, is sprayed, as one would spray any liquid from an atomizer, into the chamber of the engine cylinder-head, which it reaches in the form of vapor, having been mixed with air."

"That's all simple!"

"Here the vapor is compressed by the rising piston, and when it is squeezed up as close as it can be an electric spark is introduced into the chamber. That is what the electric battery and gear are for."

"I was wondering why one had to have electricity and gasoline both," said Frank, very much interested in the simple recital.

"The result of the introduction of the spark is the explosion of the compressed vapor, which sends the piston downward. The motion turns the shaft, and that turns the boat's propeller."

"Easy as pie."

"This operation is repeated from two to six hundred times a minute," Jack went on, "and that causes the continuous action of the machinery which sends the boat along."

"What is there about that so complicated?" demanded Frank. "Everybody you hear talking of an engine seems to speak as if it were one of the mysteries of the universe."

"It is usually the electric system which gets out of order," was the reply, "but sometimes the gasoline section balks. A man often has to try so many different things when his engine stops

that he actually does not know which one remedies the evil and sets the thing in motion."

"All right!" Frank said. "Now show me how to start the thing."

"That's easy. First turn on your gasoline, as you would turn water from a faucet into a kitchen sink. The gasoline fills the carbureter, which is the thing which feeds the engine automatically. Then you turn on your electricity by shifting a switch. That is to supply the spark. Then turn the flywheel two or three times so as to get the vapor into the cylinder and secure the first explosion. That is all there is to it. I hope you do learn to run this boat, so I can get away now and then!"

"You may get away farther than you want to!" cautioned Frank.

The *Manhattan* was a plain, usable boat, twenty-five feet long and ten feet wide, with bow and stern rather square in order to make more room inside. The cabin was ten feet long, with strong oak sides and brass-rimmed ports for light and ventilation. The cockpit, or outdoor sitting room, was of the same length as the cabin.

The engine was a plain, solidly built machine, with two cylinders, and rated at ten horsepower,

with a speed of fifteen miles an hour. It was installed under a short bridge-deck in front of the cabin, while the gasoline tanks, holding fifty gallons, were hidden under the cockpit seats.

The cabin had two wide slatted berths, supplied with hair mattresses, a movable table, an ice chest, a small coal range—the boat was not designed especially for tropical use—an ice-chest and an alcohol stove for cooking. The storage lockers and water tanks had a capacity of a week's supply of stores for four persons. It was a government boat, and was in good repute as a racer in and about Manila, in spite of its blunt bow and wide beam.

Frank pottered away at the machinery until he announced that it was like taking candy away from the children to run it, and then the two retired to the cabin to get rid of their wet garments.

"Ned and Jimmie are having a good soaking," Jack said, his ill humor all gone, as he soused his wet underclothing in a tub of sea water. "I wish they'd come home."

A dull thump, as of a canoe striking the motor boat, and a quick step on the prow caused both boys to spring to their feet.

"There they come now!" Jack cried, glancing

out into the slanting rain, "and it's good and wet they are."

The boy was about to step forward and open the cabin door when Frank caught him by the shoulder.

"Wait!" he said. "Look there!"

Jack followed the pointing finger with his eyes and saw half a dozen Filipinos clambering into the cockpit, and also saw the muzzles of American-built rifles covering the cabin door.

"Get your gun!" Jack whispered.

"We've got to do something besides shoot," Frank said. "They have the drop on us. We should have been looking out for an attempt at surprise."

There was a moment's silence, and then a man enveloped from neck to heels in a heavy raincoat and sweating tremendously in consequence, advanced to the cabin door.

"Never mind the guns!" he said, through the glass. "My men have you covered, and it would be a pity to shoot two likely boys!"

"What do you want?" demanded Frank.

"We want this boat," was the reply.

"Well, you've got it!" Jack said, angrily.

"Of course we have," was the reply. "We seem to be getting about everything we want in

this corner of the world! Where are the others?"

"Gone after a battleship!" declared Jack.

The man grinned and, opening the cabin door, stepped inside. He was tall, rather slender, with clean-cut features and bright gray eyes. His bearing was that of a gentleman, and Frank began to have an indefinable idea that he had met him before somewhere, just where he could not decide. The fellow evidently was an American, though his followers seemed to be Chinese and Filipinos.

"So he's gone after a battleship, has he?" the intruder said, shutting the cabin door behind him, after making sure that his men were standing at attention with their guns. "Do they pick battleships off trees up on the hill?"

"I don't see anything funny about it," Jack said, sourly. "Who do you mean by 'he'? What do you know about the crew of the boat?"

"I've heard of Mr. Ned Nestor," was the calm reply, "and was hoping to meet him here. However, you seem to be cheerful young fellows, and a cruise with you may not result in lost time. You are Jack Bosworth and Frank Shaw. Which one is Shaw, and which one is Bosworth?"

"I'm Shaw," answered Frank, somewhat amused at the cool impudence of the man. "What is your name?"

"I'm French," was the reply. "Not French tribally but just French. One of the sort of Frenchmen who are born of Irish parents in the city of Chicago! Anyway, you may call me French. That is near enough."

"You seem to be an amusing sort of a character," observed Frank. "What are you going to do with the *Manhattan?*"

"Why," was the smiling reply, "there is a sort of a political convention called for that hill over there, and some of the delegates are slow in coming. So I thought I'd borrow your boat and go and fetch them. They are not far away. Some of them, in fact, live on islands, not more than four or five hundred miles off."

"That will be nice!" Frank said, falling into the mood of the other. "Only you can't carry many native chiefs in this boat, not if they insist on bringing their wives and attendants along. Suppose one should insist on appearing before the convention riding in state on the back of a white elephant?"

"Never thought of that," replied the other

with a grin, "but how did you learn that the delegates were to be native chiefs?"

"I guess most everybody knows what kind of a game you're playing," Frank said with a grin which he intended to be provoking. "When you get your delegates assembled, Uncle Sam will give you an imitation of a man shooting up traitors."

"We'll have to take our chances on that," replied French, with apparent good nature. "In the meantime, we'll have to ask you to vacate the boat while we make our collection of delegates. I presume that you can get along very well on shore. Only be careful that the little brown men don't pot you with their funny little guns."

"Oh, we'll get along with the little brown men, all right," growled Jack. "When are you going to put us ashore?"

"Well," was the cool reply, "I want to wait here until I form the acquaintance of Mr. Ned Nestor and Mr. James McGraw. I have long felt a desire to meet them!"

"They'll feel proud, I know!" Jack said, provokingly. "Pirates and traitors are not so thick that it is not a pleasure to meet them.

We'll all remember, after you are all hanged, that we met you here."

"Thank you!" replied French, not at all indignant at the remark, "and now if you'll hand over the guns you have, and tell me where the others are hidden, you can walk about the boat in comparative freedom while we get supper. You see it is beginning to get dark, and I'm hungry."

There was nothing to do but to comply with the polite request, and soon the intruders were making themselves at home all over the boat. French brought one of the Filipinos into the cabin, where he sat with his gun pointing ominously at the boys whenever they moved toward the door, while the others were stationed on the prow, where they sat stolidly in the rain, with their guns under their coarse coats to keep them dry.

"Rather a scanty supply of provisions!" French said, as he investigated the lockers. "I really think I'll have to send one of my men ashore for dinner. Two men with perfectly good guns and eyesight ought to be able to keep us on friendly terms here. Besides, it seems a waste of good material to feed those fellows from this choice stock when they prefer boiled dog."

"Say, French," Jack said, "if you weren't crooked enough to make a corkscrew look like a straight-edge, you'd be a pretty good sort of a chap to go on a cruise with."

"Oh, I'm all right when I'm not abused," French replied. "If Dad had presented me with a million instead of a thirst for other people's property, I'd have had my name in the society columns every day! Isn't it about time for Ned and Jimmie to come home?" he added. "If you don't mind, I'll run the boat out a little farther, so they'll have to call and signal when they do come."

"They should have been here long ago," was the reply.

"I must insist that you remain perfectly quiet when they do come," French said, after the boat had changed position, in a moment. "I don't want to spoil this pretty boat with dark stains. Perhaps, however, they have been captured."

"You would know if they had, wouldn't you?" asked Jack.

"Why, no, I think not. You see I have just arrived, coming in the second launch, now over there in the bay. I did not go to the camp, but edged around the hill with half a dozen men in

order to see if all was safe. We've got some pretty high-up men in this game with us, and I'm afraid Wall street would stand up on its hind legs and howl if their names were known. Hence this caution."

French seemed to be a college educated man and a gentleman by instinct. While they were preparing supper he amused them with stories of his travels and adventures, and both boys heartily wished he was with them as a friend instead of an enemy. When it grew dark he sent all the Filipinos away but two, and they sat down to a good meal.

Frank questioned French, cautiously of course, but could gain little information from him. The fellow seemed fully aware of the purpose of the boy, and replied to his questions with the most extravagant stories of the empire that was to be raised in the Philippines after the United States protectorate had ceased.

"You're a queer chap," Frank said, at the conclusion of one of French's stories of the grandeur of the coming empire, "and I'd like to hear you spin yarns all night, but, if you don't mind, I'll go to bed."

"Just as you like," was the amiable reply. "I'll sit here and smoke a few more cigarets and

then follow your example. It is such a wild night that your friends may have stopped at a down-town hotel!"

"Perhaps they've stepped over to the Waldorf!" Jack replied.

The lads occupied the same bunk, and talked in whispers all through the night. They had no idea what had become of Ned and Jimmie except the supposition that they had been captured by their enemies. French retired about midnight, as calmly as if he were in his own rooms, leaving the two Filipinos on guard in the cabin.

Once Frank arose and tried to slip out, his idea being to reach the shore and look for his chums, but the brown men lifted their guns automatically as he looked out on them. All through the night they sat unblinkingly, looking out in the dim light much as glass eyes might have looked out of the head of a wooden image.

"We're sure in a bad box," Jack whispered, after this attempt at escape. "I don't believe they'll turn us loose on the island, knowing what we know. They won't take any chance of our getting away! If Ned was free, he'd have been here before this, so we may as well make up our minds that he's in trouble also."

With daylight came a cessation of the storm, and soon the sun was shining smotheringly down on the little bay. Sweltering in the cabin, Frank looked out of a port and saw a pole lifted above a clump of low bushes just back from the distant beach. As he looked the pole moved forward and back, then to the right, ducking three times and coming back to a vertical position. The pole wavered to right and left and to the front for a time, and the boy waved his hand from the open port.

"Wigwag!" he whispered. "It says: 'Brace up!' That's Jimmie!"

CHAPTER IX.

TWO KEYS TO THE TREATY BOX.

The relief of the boys at the information conveyed by the wigwag signals from the shore may well be imagined. The night had been a long and trying one, and they had about abandoned hope when the signals came.

The presence of Ned and Jimmie on the beach meant not only that they were still safe, but that there was a possibility of rescuing the *Manhattan* from the courteous pirate who had seized it. They did not know exactly how this could be accomplished, but they had every confidence in Ned's courage and resourcefulness.

The boys knew, however, that what was done must be undertaken at once, for the Filipinos who had been sent away from the boat the night before had doubtless communicated with French's friends on the island, and it was natural that they, the friends, should hasten down to the little bay soon after sunrise to look over the fortunate capture made by French.

They heard French stirring in his bunk while they were talking over plans for the rescue, and ceased whispering immediately. They knew

that Ned, probably from the presence of the Filipinos, who were drying themselves in the scorching sunshine, understood the situation on board. In fact, they realized that Ned and Jimmie would have come aboard at once if they had not received an inkling of what was going on by the change of position.

French arose, yawning, and looked lazily out of a port. He was a muscular fellow, evidently in first-class condition physically, so it was useless to attempt to overpower him, regain their weapons, and drive the Filipinos off the boat. Jack seemed to think that if they could both get hold of him they might accomplish something, but there were the guards to reckon with while the fight was in progress.

So they gave up all idea of rescue until Ned should show his hand. French glanced keenly about the cabin and then went out into the cockpit, taking a seat on the bridge deck and scanning the shore critically. The pole which had been used to convey the wigwag signals was now out of sight.

"Can you boys operate this boat?" he finally asked.

Jack was about to reply in the affirmative but Frank lifted a warning hand.

"No," the latter said, telling the falsehood brazenly. "Ned is the only one who can run it."

"Can't you start the engine?" French asked, anxiously.

The boys shook their heads.

"Then I'm going to try," French said. "As I hinted last night, when I told you I came here in a launch, there are other motor boats around the corner, in a bay on the western side of the island. I have only to get to them. There are plenty of men there who can do the job."

"I hardly think it safe for one who knows nothing of engines to fool with one," said Jack. "Suppose I see what I can do with it. I've seen Ned work the thing, and may be able to start it."

"Try it!" French said. "But if you make any foolishness with it, you'll find yourself in trouble. Understand?"

"I don't want to ruin the boat!" Jack said. "We're going to have fun with this craft before we leave it!" he added, with a grin.

"Then you'll have to hurry and have your fun," said French, "for you're going to leave it as soon as we get to the bay where the other boats are."

Jack opened a trap in the cockpit seat and placed his hand on the jar which supplied the

electricity for the spark. French was watching him, but he managed to draw the wires out without being seen. This, of course, effectually crippled the boat. He fumbled for a time with his hand on the jar, watching the shore as he did so, and then closed the trap.

After closing the trap Jack turned the fly-wheel a few times, pounded away with a wrench, and inspected the gasoline tanks, but of course no motion was transmitted to the shaft. Finally he threw down the wrench in apparent disgust.

"I can't do anything with it!" he exclaimed. "You'll have to wait until Ned comes if you can't start it yourself."

"It is my impression," said French, with a smile, "that your friend Ned is trussed up in a camp over on the other side of the island!"

"Then why don't you send for him, or for some one else to run the boat?" asked Frank innocently, his purpose being to induce French to send one of the guards away, and so reduce the force to be opposed.

"From out of the mouths of children," laughed French. "Well, you know the rest! I have an idea that you have solved the problem."

He talked in Spanish to one of the men for a moment, and the fellow rowed ashore in one

of the canoes the captors had come in and set off through the jungle. The boys watched the thickets, hoping to see some sign of a struggle. They were sure that Ned would capture the guard, and so, possibly, delay the appearance of French's friends.

But all was quiet along the coast. Ned evidently had some other plan in mind. In a few moments French proposed breakfast and entered the cabin, relying on the guard to keep the boys out of mischief. As they had no weapons, he did not believe they would make any trouble. Besides, he kept a sharp lookout through the low, open doorway of the little cabin.

Then Frank became possessed of what Ned afterwards declared to be the one brilliant idea of his life! First he asked the guard if he could speak English.

"Understan' some; speak little," was the reply.

"Well," Frank went on, "I'm going to take my morning exercises. See if you have anything like this in your blooming land!"

"Bloomin' lan'! Good! She bloom!"

The Filipino pointed away to the mass of tropical blossoms shimmering in the sunlight and grinned at what he doubtless considered a

very sharp reply. French, hearing the voices, looked out of the cabin and smiled at the antics the boy was making.

Frank threw his body into a vertical position and bent sharply off to the right. Then back to vertical and off to the left. Then back and to the right again.

"That's all right!" cried French from the cabin. "You appear to be a nimble little chap. What are those exercises for?"

"To bring all the muscles of the body into use!" replied Frank, winking at Jack, who was just beginning to understand the purpose of the sudden demand for exercise.

"Blessed if he ain't doing the wigwag with his body!" thought Jack. "That is the letter 'C'."

From the vertical Frank then dropped his body over to the left, then to the right and stopped.

"That's wigwag for 'O'," thought Jack. "I wonder what he means to say?"

"Well done!" shouted French, his hands full of tinned goods. "I'll get you a job in a circus when I get done with you!"

"That will be fine!" Frank replied, facing French with as innocent a face as a boy ever carried.

One to the right, two to the left, one to the right, and Jack read the letter "M" and saw what the next one would be. One to the right, one to the left, and Jack read the letter "E." Then three slow motions straight in front, then to vertical again.

"That means the end of the word," the boy thought, "and the word is 'COME.' Now, I wonder if he will?"

Frank kept up his odd motions, at which the Filipino seemed greatly amused, and French turned away to the alcohol stove to prepare a cup of hot cocoa. But the motions were only for effect now, and meant nothing. There was a light movement in the thicket, and three figures, crawling low, entered the canoe which the guard had left the *Manhattan* in and moved noiselessly toward the boat.

The Filipino's back was turned to the beach, for he was watching Frank. French was busy with his cocoa, condensed cream, and sugar, and so the advancing canoe was not observed until it was within a few feet of the boat. Then the guard uttered a cry of warning and raised his gun.

Frank was ready for this and the distance between himself and the guard was well calculated. He launched himself like a catapult-dart

against the slim figure, and was fortunate enough to seize the gun. Frank was an adept at the Japanese ju-jitsu game, and, much to the astonishment of the Filipino, he soon found himself, minus his gun, dropping to the bottom of the bay.

French, of course, started out of the cabin, revolver in hand, but when he stooped his tall figure in the low doorway he did not straighten it again as readily as he had expected to. Jack was on the back of his neck and shoulders, pressing him down to the bridge deck. But French was a strong man and Jack would have soon been thrown aside had Frank not engaged him.

When Ned, Pat and Jimmie sprang out of the canoe and gained the cockpit, the three were in a tangle, with Frank sitting on the hand which held the weapon. French surrendered the revolver and sat up with a sickly grin on his face when he saw the three bending over him, ready to take a hand in the proceedings.

"You win!" he said. "I know when I hold the low hand!"

"Didn't I tell you," Frank said, as soon as he could catch his breath, "that the motions you saw were calculated to bring the muscles of the body into action? Well, they did, didn't they?"

"Rather!" French replied. "Now, if you'll pull this ambitious young man off my back, I'll get into an easier position."

"You're a good fellow," Jack said, "and I'll do as you say, only you've got to behave yourself, you know."

French, looking as calm as when he had held the upper hand, arose and seated himself on the bridge deck, looking Ned over keenly as he did so.

"You didn't figure on getting into a mix-up with a lot of wild animals, did you?" asked Ned, with a smile. "These two Black Bears gave you quite a squeeze, eh?"

"Rather!" was the short reply. "Say, gentlemen," he went on, "if you'll kindly step to one side I'll time that Filipino as he plows through the jungle. I can't see him, but I can see the bushes make way for him. Believe me, at this time to-morrow he'll still be running!"

"He went up in the air some!" Pat said. "How did you ever do that, Cully? He shot up into the blue and then dove straight down into the bottom. Most wonderful thing I ever saw."

"That," answered Frank, with a grin, "was a Boy Scout hint that his presence was not needed here."

"This," said Jimmie, pointing to Pat, "is

Pat Mack, the loafer we were talkin' about the other night. He placed the signals in grass, You wouldn't think to look at him, that he was very bright, except his hair, but he is quite intelligent at times."

Jimmie dodged as Pat made for him and promptly fell overboard. The boys fished him out and Frank scolded him for mussing up the cockpit!

"The little rascal deserved it," said Pat. "I'm deserving of a more formal introduction, being of the Wolf Patrol, of the city of New York."

"Huh!" said Jimmie. "I found him tied up like a calf in a butcher's wagon, and had to cut him loose. Then Ned found him in the teeth of a dog an' had to shoot the dog! I don't think he's so much-a-much!"

Shouts were now heard coming from the jungle, and it became evident that the guard who had been thrown out of the boat had encountered others who were proceeding to the bay to inspect the wonderful prize secured by French, as reported by the Filipinos sent away the night before.

Ned suggested to Jack that he get the *Manhattan* under motion at once, as she lay within

easy reaching distance of the shore. Jack replaced the wires in the jar and the propeller was soon singing a merry tune to the waters of the bay.

"You got the engine in order quick!" French suggested.

"Of course," Jack replied. "Did you have any idea that I would help you steal our Uncle Sam's boat?"

"Take to your heels," Ned directed, as soon as the boat was fairly out of the little harbor. "It won't take long for the news to get to the other boats, and they will, of course, pursue us. Can they overtake us?" he asked, turning to French.

"They can make about fifteen miles an hour," was the reply. "What can you make?"

"Rather more than that, under pressure," was the reply.

French sat easily on the bridge deck as the *Manhattan* glided away. He appeared to be as thoroughly satisfied with the situation as when he was the captor instead of the captive. When Frank related the story of the night, in his presence, he laughed and asked for the wigwag code which Frank had used.

"So that is the meeting of the chiefs?" Ned

asked. "They are there to sign the treaty of rebellion?"

"Something of the sort," was the reply. "At least, they were there to pass upon the treaty. Now, they'll duck. That is, they will if you boys succeed in getting away from them."

"Do you know where they will go?" asked Ned.

"Look here," French said, "I'm not in a position to tell you anything about what they may or may not do. I rather like you boys, and I'd tell you all I know if I could do so decently. But I can't. To be frank with you, I'm wishing you'll outrun the boats that will come after you. I have had my pay for what I've done for the rebels, and the money is buried with a friend at Hong Kong. I don't care about meeting them again, to tell you the truth, and this being captured is an easy way out of it. Now, I'll give you my parole not to try to get away, not to try any tricks, if you let me walk about as I please."

"He's all right!" Jack put in. "He's a good fellow, all right. I vote that we give him his freedom."

"Here, too!" cried Frank.

"But I don't want my freedom!" French

said. "At least not until you can land me where these pirate chiefs can't get hold of me. I imagine they would blame me for the trouble they're in."

"They are meeting to sign the treaty of rebellion," Ned said. "Now, perhaps you can tell me when the war is to begin?"

"Right away."

"Who drew the treaty?" asked the boy.

"Some chap high up!" laughed French.

"And who has possession of it?"

"There are two keys to the box. One is held by the author of the treaty."

"And the other?" asked Ned with a knowing smile.

"By the American in charge of the party on the island," answered French. "Let me tell you this, though," he added, "you'll never see the treaty, even if you win. Also, you'll never know the name of the author of it, or the name of the man who has the second key to the treaty box. You've found out something about the conspiracy against the government, but you'll never know who organized it, or why!"

CHAPTER X.

A HOT NIGHT IN YOKOHAMA.

Ned Nestor stood on the deck of the steamship, and the steamship was entering the harbor of Yokohama, which opens from Tokyo bay, the bay from the Sagani Sea, the sea from the Pacific ocean. In the cabin of the steamship were Frank Shaw, Jack Bosworth and Jimmie McGraw. While Ned looked over the city they were approaching the three boys came to his side.

None of them had ever looked upon a Japanese city before. The scene before them was one well calculated to excite their interest and appeal to their imagination. The fishing junks sailing over the glassy waters of the bay did not seem at all like any fishing boats they had ever seen before.

The colored wooden roofs of the town seemed to have been cut out from a picture book of fairy tales. The narrow streets in sight from the deck seemed steep and not too straight. The buildings seemed to lap over on each other. To the west, standing straight up in the sky, as it

seemed, loomed the pile of Oyama mountain. To the north showed the roofs of Kanagawa.

Night fell while they gazed at the unfamiliar scene, and the lanterns on the sampans, bound for the customs *hatoba*, glistened over the bay like fireflies. The shampooer's whistles drifted out on the offshore breeze.

"Doesn't look much like coming into little old New York!" Frank exclaimed.

"Queer lookin' country!" Jimmie added.

"I'd rather be back in the *Manhattan*, among the islands north of Luzon," Jack observed. "I don't like this smell of the Orient they talk so much about."

"Not much Orient about this!" Ned said.

"I hope we'll get out of it before long," Jack went on. "I'm hungry for the wash of the China Sea."

"We'll have a little China Sea made for you, an' tuck it away in Central Park," Jimmie laughed.

"All right!" replied Jack. "I wonder why some one didn't think of that before! Fine scheme!"

On leaving the bay where such an eventful night had been passed, the boys had driven the *Manhattan* at full speed directly to Manila.

The boat was rather small for such a trip, but it had behaved nobly, and the lads had enjoyed the trip immensely.

They had for a time been pursued by the launches which had anchored on the opposite side of the little island, but the chase had soon been abandoned, as the *Manhattan* was the fastest boat of the three.

On the way to Manila, Ned had held several long conversations with French, but had gained little information from him. He corroborated what little was known regarding the conspiracy for the establishing of a native government on the Philippines, but would not reveal what he knew of the interests interested or of the men at the head of the movement.

At Manila, French had been released on parole at the urgent request of Frank and Jack, who had formed a liking for the courteous gentleman who had treated them so kindly during the few hours he had been their jailer. French, however, had promised to remain at Manila and to report daily at military headquarters.

"I don't understand what his share in the plot is, or has been," Ned had explained, "but it is evident that he will be needed only as a witness."

At Manila Ned had held a long conference

with Major John Ross, and that gentleman had seemed overjoyed at the report the boy had presented, especially as it made his return to the group of islands to the north unnecessary. After remaining in Manila one day and a night, Ned had been directed to continue his investigation of the case in his own way.

To tell the truth, Major John Ross and the military men with whom Ned conferred at Manila treated the employment of the boy by the authorities at Washington as a good deal of a joke, as a whim. They were not discourteous to Ned, but they took no interest in his suggestions. For some hours after his departure, his employment on the case was the subject of many sarcastic remarks.

However, those in charge had consented to hold the *Manhattan* subject to his orders, and had promised to give any communications received from him due attention. And this was the situation when the boy, following clues secured at the nipa hut and hints obtained from Pat, who had kept his ears open during his captivity, and from French, had sailed away for Japan with his chums on a steamer which was leaving Manila for Yokohama. Pat Mack, released from service by the effort of Major Ross,

at his own request, had been left at Manila in charge of the *Manhattan*.

The boys landed shortly after dark and proceeded to a hotel where the English language or something like it was spoken. Everything was new and strange, the place being as unlike a Broadway hotel as it is possible to imagine. However, the meals were served in half-American fashion, and the rooms were tolerably comfortable.

"Now," Ned said, after their first meal in Yokohama was over, "we did not come here to visit the palaces of the wealthy, or to inspect the United States consulate. We've got to get down into the slums a bit if we find what I want. The man who led the party that captured Lieutenant Rowe was sent away as soon as he got to his masters. You doubtless understand why. They did not want him implicated in the plot."

"How do you know?" asked Jimmie. "You didn't see him go, did you?"

"Then he must be up some," Jack said.

"And he left Manila on a boat bound for Yokohama," Frank added. "I know about that, for French gave me a valuable tip. And he was accompanied by an American sailor with a thirst for strong drink."

"I guess you've got the idea, all right," Ned said, with a smile. "But I did not state the case exactly as it is. I said that the man who led the party against Lieutenant Rowe was sent away. I should have said that the man suspected of having been at the head of that expedition had mysteriously disappeared from Manila on the very day of his return there after an absence unaccounted for, and that it was believed he had taken a steamer for Yokohama. I stated my conclusions as facts."

"And there was an American sailor with him," insisted Frank.

"Yes, an American sailor who evidently knew too much. At least, that is the way I figure it out. Now, we are not looking for this high-brow at this time, but for the American sailor."

"That makes it all the pleasanter!" Jack said. "We'll have a chance to see life in Japan as it is. I'd feel better about this little outing, though, if I knew just what has become of Lieutenant Rowe."

"I often wish we had tried to release him," Ned replied, "but we were lucky to get off with whole hides. Anyway, Pat says they were to release him in a short time, after the plot is per-

fected. All they wanted was his dispatches, and they will hold him captive only because his release might lead to the premature discovery of the meeting of chiefs on the island."

"Well, let us get busy with the underworld of Japan," Jack said. "I'll bet we find plenty of American sailors with thirsts."

On a dark night in Yokohama the houses in the section visited by the boys look very much alike. They are drygoods box affairs, two stories high, with peaked roofs, paper walls and narrow piazzas. All the shops are looking for the American sailor.

Ned secured an interpreter, and the boys strolled through a dozen or more cheap joints before they came to a halt and sat down. The places were all alike. There was split matting on the floors, always, and sailors drinking at little tables. There was always a fair grade of tea, always *sake*, always a wheezy graphophone.

One might also buy whiskey, ale and other intoxicating drinks. And there were also the *geisha* dances and the *nesans* running up stairs and down with their little white socks and flowery skirts, carrying refreshments. There were also men in *kimonos* and cowboy hats, the former to give the Japanese color and the latter to

inform customers that the American trade was catered to!

"How you goin' to know this American sailor when you find him?" asked Jimmie, as the boys sat with steaming cups of tea before them.

"I have his photograph," laughed Ned.

"Let's see it!" cried Jack.

"I'll bet it's a mental photograph!" Jimmie went on. "That is the only kind Ned carries."

"What does he look like?" asked Frank.

"Yes; tell us. We may see him first!" urged Jimmie.

"He's short, and very broad across the shoulders, with one shoulder lower than the other. He is quite bald, and there is a cicatrice on his left cheek where a Malay cut him. There is a squint in one of his eyes, and there is a scar along the ball of his right thumb."

"Quit your kiddin'!" said Jimmie. "You never saw him."

"Pat saw him," was the reply, "and French and some of the military people at Manila saw him. He left with the man whose acquaintance I want to make, or just before him."

"Seems like looking for a needle in a haymow," Frank said, "but I'll wager my hat against a swipe in the jaw that we find him."

"'We!'" repeated Jimmie, with due scorn.

"For instance," Frank said, "what do you think of the fellow over there talking with the man in the *kimono* and the derby hat of the vintage of 1880?"

"He's short and broad, and one of his shoulders is higher than the other," Jimmie replied.

"Don't attract his attention," Ned warned. "He sat there when we came in, and does not seem to notice us."

"You goin' to geezle him?" asked Jimmie.

"If he were in Manila I certainly should," was the answer, "but it would never answer here. Look!" the lad added. "He seems to be having trouble with one of the waiters."

"He's gone broke, I guess," Jimmie said, "an' there's a kick on his bill."

"An American friend would look pretty good to him now," Ned said thoughtfully.

There was in the mind of the boy a thought that circumstances were favoring him. If he could only befriend the man!

"You don't suppose the fellow he came here with left him in the lurch, do you?" asked Jimmie, something like Ned's thought coming to him. "If he did, why—"

"That's what I've been thinking," Ned re-

plied. "Anyway, I'm going over there and have a talk with him."

"Before you blow yourself on him," laughed Jimmie, "look at the ball of his right thumb an' see if there's a scar there!"

"If he's a sailorman from New York," Jack put in, "he'll eat corn out of your hand, like a billy goat! Go on and talk with him, Ned."

Ned arose to his feet and moved toward the table where the sailor sat. Then he turned back to the boys again.

"If I go away with him," he said, "don't attempt to follow us. Go back to the hotel and wait for me. You understand, now, Jimmie? No chasing out after me! This is not New York!"

"I'll be good!" replied the boy, with a wink at Jack.

"You bet you will!" replied Jack, seizing him by the sleeve. "You don't get away from me tonight. Too much trouble looking you up!"

"What are we to do with that blooming interpreter?" asked Frank, motioning to the Jap, who sat a short distance away, where he could not overhear the talk.

"Take him back to the hotel with you," was the reply, "and hold him there until I come."

There was no little excitement around the table where the sailor sat when Ned approached it. The sailor was talking in English, the waiter was talking in his native tongue, and the bystanders were trying to tell each one what the other was saying.

Ned made out from the pigeon English brought forth by the bystanders that the sailor had run up a large bill and was unable to pay it.

"P'lice come!" one of the officious ones said.

The sailor heard the words and stirred uneasily in his seat. After wiggling about for a moment he removed his cap and scratched a bald head thoughtfully. Ned advanced to his side and laid a hand on his arm, whereat the sailor squirmed as if he anticipated immediate arrest.

"What's the trouble, pard?" the boy asked.

The sailor sat back in his chair and regarded Ned with evident suspicion for a moment, then, observing that his interrogator was only a boy, he extended his hand, his bleary eyes showing the pleasure he felt at the meeting.

"You look mighty good to me!" he said, in the tone and manner of a man who had had educational advantages.

"What's the difficulty?" repeated Ned,

taking the hard hand of the other. "I saw the commotion here and thought you might be in trouble. You're an American, I take it?"

"Proud to say yes to that!" replied the other.

"Well, what are they trying to do to you?" asked Ned, taking a chair by his side. "Americans must stand back to back when they meet in a place like this!"

"They don't all do that," was the reply. "My pardner got me here and shook me. I'm broke, and that's all there is to it. Kept buying after I had spent all my money. I guess it is the coop for mine!"

"Perhaps we can fix it up in some way," Ned said. "I'm not a millionaire, but I may be able to help you out. How much do you owe?"

"About two dollars in American money," was the reply. "It is a small sum, but I'm your slave for life if you get me out of this. Ever spend a day in a Japanese jail, waiting for the American consul to get you out?"

"Never did," was the reply. "How are you fixed for lodgings?"

"Got a room up over a tea house," was the reply. "I'm looking for a ship that will take me back to New York."

"Well," Ned said, "I'll pay this bill and go

home with you for the night. I'll need free lodgings somewhere after I settle!"

"You'll be as welcome as the flowers of May!" the sailor said, and the boys, still sitting where Ned had left them, saw him hand the waiter some money and leave the place with the sailor.

A moment later, however, they saw a keen-eyed Jap come rushing through the door and up to the table where the sailor had been seated. He talked with the waiter a moment, speaking angrily at last, and darted out of the door again.

"That fellow came after the sailor," Frank said, "and will follow him. When he finds Ned working him for his story he won't do a thing to Ned!"

"An' we'll go back to the hotel, like good little boys, an' sit there knittin' while they pinch Ned an' chuck him into the bay! Not for your uncle!"

"We'd make a hit wandering about Yokohama in the night!" Jack said. "I reckon Ned can take care of himself. Anyway, he's had to go and find you every time you've gone out without him."

But before Jack had finished Jimmie had jerked away and was out in the street.

CHAPTER XI.

A FAIRY HISTORY OF JAPAN

The shop in which Ned had discovered the object of his search was well down toward the water front, and the course of the sailor was now toward the center of the city. The two passed the customs quarters and the official offices of the city—Yokohama is the old-time treaty port of Japan—and so on to wide streets lined with shops, still alight, though the hour was getting late.

Such quaint little shops Ned had never seen before, and more than once he stopped to look at lacquered ware of rare quality, bronze work, and fancy embroidery. Directly the sailor led the way from the wide streets to the old-time narrow ones in the native quarter, which were not far from the old canal which virtually makes an island of the town.

After proceeding, with hesitating steps, down a particularly dark and foul-smelling street, the sailor paused at a corner, glanced up at a window in a tea-chest of a house which stood flush with

the alley-like thoroughfare, and began the ascent of a flight of stairs which swayed under his weight.

On the corner below the tea-house was still open, and the invariable graphophone was grinding out some indistinguishable tune. When the two passed up the dark stairway an attendant slipped out of the public room, walked to the foot of the stairs, and observed the two mounting figures. When the sailor opened the door to as miserable a room as the sun of the Orient ever shone on, the attendant slipped back to the public room and conferred with a keen-eyed, slender man who sat there—a man garbed in the native costume, but bearing in manner and face the stamp of a European!

The sailor closed the door of his room and set a match to a candle which he found on a shelf hanging to a wall. There was nothing in the room, nothing but mats, as it seemed to Ned. There was no table, no chair. Only the mats to sit on and sleep on. The walls were of paper, and Ned saw with pleasure that the whole front of the room, which faced the alley, might be rolled up at will!

The sailor dropped on the floor and fumbled in his clothing for a cigarette.

"Have you got the makings?" he asked, giving up the search at last.

Ned shook his head.

"I have need of all my wits," he said, "and never befuddle my brain with tobacco. It's the curse of the age."

"I've got to have a cigarette," the sailor said. "I'll go crazy if I don't have one! I won't sleep a wink, either!" he whined.

Ned handed him a dime and pointed to the door.

"Go and buy some," he said, knowing that the fellow would be in fighting mood if he was not supplied with the narcotic. "Come back here and smoke."

The sailor looked at the dime sorrowfully, scorning the small piece of silver because it wasn't a dollar, as Ned concluded—pitying himself, too, because it would not buy what he wanted most—liquor!

Ned handed him a quarter and bade him hasten back. With the man's nerves crying out for accustomed stimulants, the boy knew that he could do nothing with him. He must get him into a companionable mood if possible. He dreaded the night, which seemed about to be

passed in the fumes of tobacco and liquor, but there was no help for it that he could see.

Presently the sailor came back with a package of cigarettes, gin in a bottle, and a jug of water. He arranged the articles in a half-circle about him when he sat down on a mat. It seemed pitiful to the boy, the sailor's dependence on the nerve-destroying things he looked upon as necessary to his comfort. Only for these, only for their constant use for years, the man might have been honored and respected and possessed a home among his kind instead of being an object of contempt in a foreign port.

"Here's to the Flowery Kingdom!" the sailor said, the bottle at his lips. "Here's life to you, not existence! What's your name?" he added, stopping in the midst of a grin which wrinkled his dissipated face horribly to cast a glance of suspicion on the boy sitting in pity before him. "My name," he added, without waiting for Ned to reply to his question, "is Brown—B-R-O-W-N.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Brown," Ned said. "One is always glad to meet Americans in a place like this. Now," he went on, resolved to have his talk out before the sailor became too befuddled to talk coherently, "you spoke about wanting to get back to New

York. Well, the *Fultonia* leaves for New York by way of Manila, to-morrow afternoon, and I may be able to arrange a passage for you. I'm a friend of the captain's."

"Not on your life! Not by way of Manila!" the sailor cried. "I wouldn't go back to Manila for all the gold there is in Standard Oil! I'm going to lose myself on a wind-jammer! Manila's unhealthy for me!" he added with a wink.

"I wasn't thinking of remaining there," said Ned. "I'm going back to New York."

"Wind-jammer for mine!" Brown insisted. "Why," he added, swinging his bottle of gin in the air, "do you know that I'd like to get inside a boat with wide white wings and sail about the Orient forever! The more I mix with Englishmen and Americans the more I think of the Japs. It was an American that threw me down to-night. I did something for him, and—"

The sailor paused, gave a slight shiver, and looked down at his right hand. Then he brushed it, as if trying to wipe something away that was obstinate and hard to get rid of—some stain like the stain of blood!

"And he left you stranded?" Ned continued "I'm glad I happened along," he added, not

caring to say how glad he was, nor how much the meeting might mean to him!

"I did his dirty work!" the sailor went on, his tongue loosened by the liquor. "I did for him what I never did before, what I never will do again! And he went back on me! He threw me down! I'd like to meet him on Roosevelt street, New York! I'd provide against his throwing anyone else down!"

"What did you do for him?" Ned asked, with as innocent a manner as he could assume.

"That's my business!" Brown answered, with a sly wink. "That's between the two of us! If I had him here I'd cut his heart out, and show you how black it is."

The sailor was fast coming under the influence of the gin, and Ned knew that he must keep him talking or he would drop off into drugged slumber. He sounded him on half a dozen subjects, intending to lead him back to the man's connection with the plot, but he would not talk until the subject of Japan was brought up. He seemed to be infatuated with the Flowery Kingdom.

"I know the history of Japan," he said, with a brightening of the eyes. "In the beginning, the world was like an egg in shape. The

white became heaven, and the yolk became earth. You may read about it yourself in the book called "*The Way of the Gods.*" Then two Gods descended from heaven, and a son called Omikami was born to them, and his body was so bright that he flew up into the sky and became the sun.

"What do you think of that? He became the sun. And a daughter was born to the two Gods, and she became the moon. The moon you see when the sun goes down. Then the children that were born after these became strong and founded the Empire of Japan. And the original inhabitants were hairy on the body and ate raw meat. You see I know all about it!"

"And Japan may in time acquire all Asia," Ned said, desiring to lead the sailor back to within reaching distance of the subject he was most interested in. "In time the Philippines may belong to Japan."

The sailor winked at Ned mysteriously and flourished his bottle of gin.

"I know!" he cried. "I know! If Japan gets the Philippines she'll have to fight a thousand tribes and the monkeys in the trees! She'll have to fight also the crocodiles in the brooks.

'I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul—cause thy two eyes, like stars, to start from their spheres, and thy—.' Say," he said with a laugh, "what do you think of me anyway? You think I've got a jag on, don't you. Never was soberer in my innocent life!"

"If you'll describe this man that threw you down," Ned said, anxious to have done with the by-play, "and tell me where to look for him, I'll go and see what I can do for you. How much was he to give you?"

"Barrels!"

The sailor paused and stretched his hands above his head, the bottle glistening in one of them. "He was to pile the greenbacks up so high—for me to wade in, and wipe my feet on. You can't find him."

There was a stealthy movement on the stairs, and a movement not so stealthy at the door. Ned heard a hand moving over the bamboo, and made ready for a spring. He had no idea who the visitor might be, but his manner of approach showed him to be no friend of the sailor's.

There were no more sounds at the door, and Ned glanced casually in that direction. The

candle on the wobbling shelf gave forth little light, and that seemed to grow more shadows than rays of illumination. The shadows seemed deepest and most uncertain of form at the door, but, at the center of the odd-shape panel in the middle of the door he thought he saw a malevolent eye looking forth into the room.

He wondered if an eye was really there, or if, his imagination stirred by the wierd scene and the fairy history of Japan which the sailor had repeated, he was seeing things not present to the senses!

In a moment there was no doubt, for the malevolent eye left the aperture and there was again a fumbling at the door. Ned made no motion, but sat as if unconscious of any intruder being there. He knew that the person at the door was there to watch the sailor, to see that he did not talk too much, to see that he did not leave Yokohama until the trap of treason had been fully set and baited.

There was no doubt in the mind of the boy now that he had found the man he had set out in quest of. Of course the man who had planned the conspiracy, who was doubtless assisting the tribes to arms and ammunition by way of the unpatrolled China Sea, was the one he aimed to

reach in time. The sailor was only a link in the chain which led to the object sought.

The mind of the boy was not at that time much concerned with thoughts for his own safety although he could never be in more deadly peril than he was at that moment when he was looked at through the opening in the door. His one idea was to get a view of the spy, and with this object in view he arose and stepped toward the door.

"You're getting sleepy," he said to the sailor, "and I'll go out and get a little fresh air while you sleep. I shall not be far away."

"You're a good fellow," Brown cried, already half asleep. "When I get out of this I'll tell you something that'll make your fortune. Bring back another bottle of gin. Thish mos' gone!"

Ned stood by the door for a moment in order to give the spy time to get back to the bottom of the stairs. He could see no profit in a struggle in that place, and there was certain to be one if he permitted the spy to know that his movements had been observed.

Finally he heard soft footsteps on the stairs. He waited only an instant after this before passing out into the narrow hall. The staircase

was clear, but a door opening into it from the public room below was open and a broad zone of light lay on the floor of the passage and on the wall.

Ned stood in the doorway and looked out on the street, now and then turning his eyes in the direction of the public room. At a table well toward the back end of the place he saw the man he was looking for. He was seated at a table with two men who appeared to be American sailors. While he stood there, wondering at the inefficiency of the disguise the man wore, at the nervè which prompted him to wear that fragment of native costume when his face, manner and accent bespoke the cultured American another sailor came swaggering into the place.

This sailor was unquestionably intoxicated. He swayed back and forth as he walked, and would have fallen to the floor at the very door only for the restraining hand of a boy who accompanied him. Immediately on his appearance waiters rushed forward to attend to his wants, to give him a chair and a table, and to pay him all sorts of little attentions.

In such places in all foreign ports the American sailor is the easy mark. He drinks—when he drinks at all—until he is past all wisdom re-

garding the expenditure of money, with the result that he literally throws it away. In the appearance of this sailor the attendants saw a rich harvest, not only for the place but for themselves.

But Ned saw more than this. He saw the freckled face and sparkling eyes of Jimmie McGraw, steering the drunken sailor to the table pointed out for him. The boy was in high humor, for he joked with the blundering sailor, and instead of sitting down at the table—brought into use there because the foreigners insist on not drinking sitting on the floor—he sat down on it and swung his feet downward.

"Look at the kid!" one of the men at the table Ned was watching said. "Looks like he was on South Clark street, Chicago."

"Don't get gay, now!" Jimmie retorted. "I'm playin' I'm a tug towin' this 'ere sailorman to bed."

"You've got a job on your hands," the other said, and then the three at the table bent their heads forward and talked in whispers. Now and then they faced toward the doorway, but Ned was then too far toward the street for them to observe him.

They did not seem at all suspicious of Jimmie,

and Ned concluded that such occurrences were not uncommon there. Jimmie seated his companion more firmly in his chair in a moment and passed out, stopping at the doorway where Ned stood.

"You duck!" the boy said. "That man in there with the sailors followed you here, an' I followed him here. You duck!"

"I haven't got the information I'm after yet," Ned said. "How in the world did you get here?"

"Followed the chap that followed you," was the quick reply. "Out here I come upon that beery sailor and took him in tow!"

"Good idea," Ned said. "Now, you slip past me and go up stairs, to the room in front, and see if the man there can be gotten away. I want to size up the men in there. I can see them by poking my head out occasionally, but they can't see me."

"Well, you keep your gun ready," Jimmie warned. "This ain't New York, with a cop every half block an' a taxicab always within reach. This is Yokohama! Don't you forget that!"

"Don't remain up there long!" said Ned.

Jimmie hastened away, and Ned stood lean-

ing against the casing of the doorway. Then Jimmie came down the stairs at a jump, making no pretense of secrecy, and behind him there was a rush of feet and a jumble of foreign words.

The three men Ned had been watching sprang up from their table and dashed toward the front of the place, and all was confusion in an instant. The sailor who had come in with Jimmie attempted to lean carelessly back in his chair and toppled over on the floor, where he lay with the slippered feet of the attendants striking him in their rush for the door.

"Run!" Jimmie cried as he approached Ned. "Hot foot! The man you sent me to is dead, and there's a bunch of ruffians after us. Run! Beat it!"

CHAPTER XII.

PAT TAKES A BIG CHANCE.

The *Manhattan* glided like a duck over the waters of the Bashee Channel, South of the Island of Formosa. A week had passed since that night in Yokohama, and Ned and Jimmie were back among the islands north of Luzon.

It had been a close shave that night, for the boys had been only a few feet ahead of their pursuers when they were fortunate enough to come upon a party of American marines on shore leave. The marines had gathered about the panting boys and finally, after fighting off the Japs, conducted them to their hotel.

The last Ned saw of the man whom he believed to be an American military man in the disguise of a Jap he was running in a most undignified manner down the street, as if not willing to look upon the uniforms of the marines. The next morning he had caught a glimpse of the fellow, but had not been able to get close to him. On the day before he left for Manila the man had left the port. Ned was of the opinion that he had traveled on to Manila, and so on to the

group of islands which the *Manhattan* was now nosing among.

At Manila Ned had again conferred with Major John Ross, and that dignified official had virtually dismissed the boy from the service. He had scolded him for going over to Yokohama and for stirring up a mess there, as he put it, between a party of hilarious marines and the local police.

However, Ned did not accept dismissal. Instead of remaining at Manila, as ordered to do, until word could be received from Washington, he joined Pat in the motor boat, provisioned her for a long cruise, and set out to locate the island which was to see the signing of the treaty between the tribes of the Philippines—the treaty which was certain to bring war and starvation to the islands.

He was sure the treaty had not yet been signed, and he could not understand the delay. It did not seem possible that his appearance at the island first chosen for the meeting could have caused so long a wait in the important negotiations. He had suspicions at times that the disappearance from the scene of the men he had followed to Yokohama had had something to do with the delay.

In looking over the results of the trip to the Japanese city, Ned was fairly well satisfied with them. He believed that he had caught a glimpse of the man who was at the head of the plot against the United States. When he considered that the sailor who had complained so bitterly of the manner in which he had been treated had been murdered in his room while the suspect sat below in disguise, he did not doubt that the crime had been committed by paid assassins for the purpose of enforcing secrecy.

On the whole he was well pleased with the progress of the case. He had made his discoveries by deviating from the paths usually followed by investigators, but he believed that he held the right clues in his hands. It remained for him now to find the island where the treaty was to be signed and await developments.

It was sure that if the king-pins of the conspiracy could be captured the whole fabric would fall to the ground. He believed that large sums of money were being used, though he could not tell where the cash was coming from. Sometimes he thought commercial interests guilty of the reckless thing that was being done. Sometimes he thought the plot original with the foxy prime minister of some nation looking for additional possessions in the Orient.

At Manila he had learned that Lieutenant Rowe had been restored to liberty, badly wounded, but in a fair way to recover. The Lieutenant, however could do little to assist the investigation, as he had learned little during his captivity, had not been permitted to see the leading spirits. As Ned had believed from the first, the men who attacked him were not inclined to do murder unnecessarily. All they sought was the sealed orders carried by the officer and the man who had followed on after him and entered unceremoniously through the window.

One thing Ned could not understand was the matter of the despatches handed the Lieutenant by the man who had entered the nipa hut in so strange a manner, shortly after midnight on the night of the attack. These instructions, according to reports, countermanded the ones Lieutenant Rowe had received in person at Manila, and would have turned him back without conferring with Major Ross or the lads he had with him.

The fourth man had declared, when seen by by Ned at Manila, that he had managed to follow on the heels of the Lieutenant with the supplemental instructions, and had reached the

island at midnight. He said that he had entered by way of the window because the front of the house seemed to be watched with hostile intent, and because there was a ladder there ready to his hand.

This story seemed a little fishy to Ned, but he had no means of proving that the man was not telling the truth. The fellow certainly had been given despatches to deliver to Lieutenant Rowe, with orders to follow him and place them in his hands personally. But the instructions received by the Lieutenant were not, it was asserted, the ones sent to him.

The supplemental instructions would have taken him back to Manila at once, as has been said, without conferring with Major Ross and the assistants he had brought with him. It was insisted at the military office that the instructions sent out had increased rather than diminished the Lieutenant's authority to act.

One of two things seemed to be true. Either there was a traitor in the office, or the instructions had been changed. The envelope might have been shifted after reaching the man's hands or he might have substituted the counterfeit ones for the original ones. In this latter case the messenger was himself a traitor, and would bear watching.

Ned would have liked nothing better than to have remained in Manila for the purpose of investigating this phase of the case, but he believed that the mystery would be solved eventually where the work was being done—on the ground with the native tribes which were being urged into revolt. So he had provisioned the *Manhattan* and, much to the joy of the boys, headed for the group of islands north of Luzon.

It was glorious there in the channel, with the green islands lifting from the lacquered sea, bluer than any sky the lads had ever seen. From the bow of the *Manhattan* spread two thin emerald lines curling transparently and tipped with foam. Upon the immensity of the sea there would be for hours no other movement, and upon the immensity of the sky there would not be a fleck of cloud. At night the boys slept in their bunks with the waves whispering to the sand of some sheltered bay.

"I hope we'll never find the island where the treaty is to be signed," Jack said, one morning. "I'd like to stay here forever."

"Why don't you build a hut on one of the islands and stay there, then?" asked Jimmie.

"I guess you'd soon get weary of doin' the Robinson Crusoe act an' get back to the Great White Way!"

"I'm not looking for life in the jungle," Jack replied. "The water is good enough for me."

One morning when the *Manhattan* lay in a bay on the eastern shore of an island of good size and Jack proposed a trip to the shore.

"There's game up there," he said, pointing to an elevation not far from the beach. "Unless I'm very much mistaken there is a line of hills on the other side of this bit of land, with a valley in between the two. If this is right, that valley will be well stocked with game, and I'm getting hungry for fresh meat."

"There's surely one class of animal ife there," Frank said. "Hear the monkeys! They must be holding some kind of a convention!"

While the boys were talking Ned came out of the cabin with his glass. He gazed landward for a long time and then handed the glass to Jack.

"There's something stirring up the little chaps," he said.

"They're always wigglin' like a basket of snakes," Jimmie observed.

"Sounds like they were calling the police," Frank put in.

"I'll tell you about it when I return," Jack said. "If there's anything grand, gloomy or

peculiar over there I'll be sure to find it. Want to go along with me, little boy?" he added, turning to Jimmie, who at once resented this manner of address by trying to push Jack overboard.

"Of course I'm goin'," Jimmie declared, giving over his benevolent intentions with regard to Jack. "I reckon you'll get lost if you go six yards away from the *Manhattan* alone."

"Run along, both of you!" Ned said. "And don't get into trouble. We've got no time to waste looking up runaway boys."

"If the native tribes are holding a convention there," Frank said, as the boys slipped into the boat which they were to row ashore, "just give them my compliments and ask them to dinner."

For some moments after the boys reached the white beach and disappeared in the jungle Ned stood scanning the island with his glass.

"I half believe the chiefs are there," he said, turning to Frank.

"Then why did you let the boys go?" asked the latter.

"I wish now that I hadn't," Ned replied.

"Say," Pat called out, "I can go and bring 'em back, They can't be very far away. Shall I?"

"Yes," was the hesitating reply, "and bring back all the news you can about what is going

on on the island. There's something unusual taking place there, judging from the row the the monkeys are making.

"How you going to get ashore?" asked Frank. "The boat is over there on the beach."

"I'll show you," Pat replied.

The next moment he was in the water, striking out with lusty strokes for the shore, only a few rods away.

There's a crocodile coming!" Frank called out to him.

The call was designed to make Pat show a burst of speed, but it did indeed serve as a warning to the swimmer, for a huge crocodile separated himself from a point a few paces away and started to make a breakfast of the boy.

Pat saw the danger and hesitated an instant, uncertain whether to turn back to the *Manhattan* or to strike out for the shore. This second of hesitation would have cost him his life if Ned had not acted promptly.

When he saw that the crocodile was sure to win in the race, he fired one shot and the saurian disappeared beneath the surface of the water, shot through the eye. Pat turned back to the Manhattan, but Ned directed him to go on to the shore, find the boys, and return as quickly as possible.

"And row back here before you go," continued Ned.

"And swim to the beach again?" called Pat, glancing cautiously about. "Not on your whiskers!"

"Afraid of a little crocodile not more then forty feet long!" laughed Frank, as Pat reached the beach and entered the boat."

"Here's the boat," Pat called, in a few moments, touching the bow of the *Manhattan*. "What next!"

"I'm going with you and bring it back," Ned replied. "When you boys reach the beach you'll have to call out. I'm going to take the *Manhattan* out farther."

"All right!" Pat said. "I think you need to after that shot!"

"And tell the boys," Ned went on, "that they'll have the chiefs of a hundred tribes of dog-eaters after them if they don't get to the boat right quick!"

"I guess that ought to bring them!" Frank said.

Ned accompanied Pat to the beach, brought the boat back, and then moved the *Manhattan* some distance out in the bay.

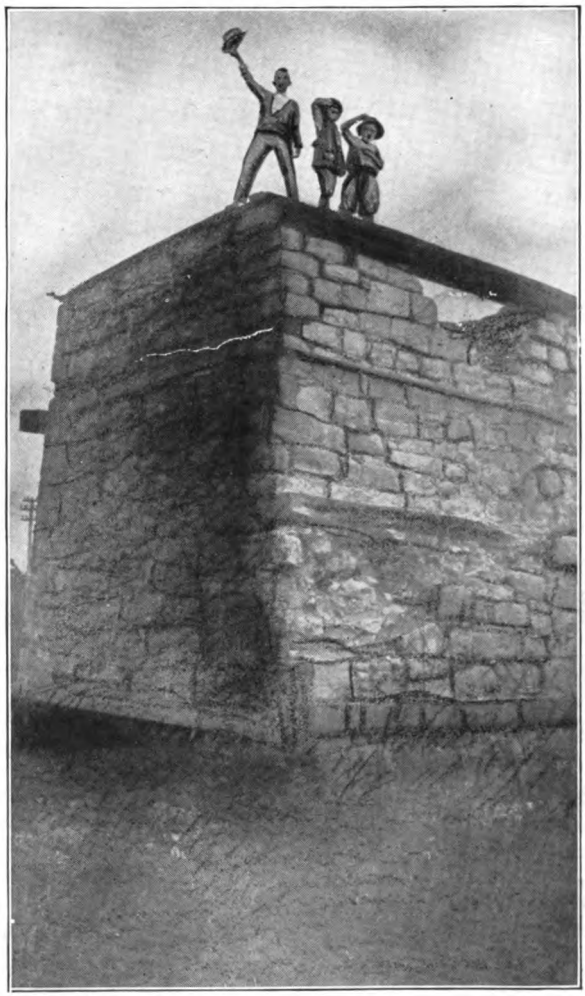

ILLUSTRATION No. 4

Boy Scouts in the Philippines; or The Key to the Treaty Box.

"Do you really think the boys are in danger?" asked Frank, after they had settled down to a careful watch of the beach.

"They certainly are," was the reply.

"Do you think the chiefs are really on that island?"

"Yes; in fact, I am quite certain of it."

"Oh, a wild cat might have stirred up the monkeys," Frank said, hardly believing the lame explanation of the disturbances which he was making.

Ned pointed off to the west.

"Look there," he said.

"Can't see a thing."

"Then take the glass," Ned said.

"Why," Frank said, "there's smoke over there on the west coast! Now, what do you think of that? It wasn't there a few minutes ago."

"No," replied Ned. "It wasn't there a few minutes ago. It puffed up while I was looking that way."

"It must be a steam launch," Frank observed.

"Of course," Ned replied, "and steam has been gotten up since that shot was fired. Now do you understand?"

"I'm afraid I do," Frank replied. "And the steamer is coming around here to see what's going on, and the native chiefs will be coming down to the bay to look the situation over! Where do the boys come out?"

"They are in a dangerous position," Ned replied.

"I hope they'll get here before the steamer turns that point."

"They will have to return pretty soon if they do," Ned said, looking again through his glass, for the steamer is approaching the southern end of the island rapidly, and will soon be in sight."

"Can we beat it?" asked Frank.

"On the run? I'm afraid not. If the boys were here we might stand a chance of keeping out of their way for a long time, but we've got to remain here until the last moment in the hope of their returning."

"You're not thinking of going away and leaving them, are you?" asked Frank, surprised at Ned's remark.

"If we stay here and submit to capture," Ned replied, "it is all off for all of us. If we get away we may be able to render assistance to the boys, but if we remain here and are killed or taken prisoners there is little hope for them,

surrounded by savages on an unknown island, Without even a boat."

"Of course you are right," Frank said, "It seems cruel to sail away and leave them here."

The steamer, as shown by the column of smoke, was now approaching the southern end of the island, and would soon be in a position from which the *Manhattan* might be seen.

"If we are going at all," Ned said, with a sigh, "we may as well be moving. We ought to be able to make the north end by the time they gain the south end. It will be a game of chase, I reckon. I hope the boys will understand."

"They certainly will," replied Frank. "They know well enough we are no quitters, and that there is usually a good reason for what you do."

The *Manhattan* was soon in motion, speeding at the rate of fifteen or eighteen miles an hour toward the north end of the island. Ned watched the smoke of the steamer intently as the race progressed. Finally the point at the north was turned, and, much to the surprise of both boys, they saw Pat standing on the beach beckoning to them in a manner full of excitement.

"There's been something doing," said Frank, with a shiver.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE WILD CAT PATROL, MANILA.

The smoke from the steamer was now on the south end of the island, moving along toward the east with a speed which showed Ned that it would be impossible to outfoot the larger craft.

There was little time to lose, if the *Manhattan* was to continue the flight, and yet it was evident that Pat had something of importance to communicate or desired to be at once taken on board. Ned did not hesitate long, for the boy's life might be at stake.

But when the *Manhattan* neared the point of land upon which Pat stood the boy shook his head and pointed to the west. It was clear that he did not wish to be taken on board there.

Ned kept on toward the beach, however, notwithstanding Pat's frantic gestures, and was not a little annoyed when he saw the boy wade out into the water, down the sloping shore, lapped by tiny waves, and strike out boldly for the boat.

He reached the *Manhattan* in safety, was hauled in, and sank down in the cockpit with a grunt of exhaustion for he had exerted his

full strength, "and then some" as he afterwards explained, in the long swim. Presently he arose and pointed to a little projection on the shore, perhaps three hundred yards ahead.

"There's a river runs in there," he said, and the *Manhattan* will find a safe harbor, as the stream though narrow, is deep and overhung with trees and creepers."

"But they must know that there is a boat here," Frank said. "This engine of ours talks some when she moves."

"I dont think they heard it," Pat insisted.

"But the shot?" asked Ned.

"That might have come from the island. "Anyway," Pat went on, "there is little commotion on the island except that made by the monkeys and the birds."

"Did you see anything of the boys?" asked Ned, the safety of Jack and Jimmie concerning him greatly.

"No," was the disappointing reply. "They got too good a start on me."

"How far inland did you go?" asked Frank.

By this time the *Manhattan* was under way, and the place of refuge spoken of by the boy was not far away.

"I climbed the hill that runs near the shore," was the reply. "The first thing I saw was a collection of tents and leaf shelters."

Ned and Frank both gave exclamations of amazement.

"Found at last!" Frank said.

"The next thing I saw," Pat went on, "was a small steamer lying in a bay on the west shore. There is a break in the hills which line that coast, and I could see the boat plainly. I have seen her in Manila. It is the *Miles*, and she is carrying the American flag. She got up steam just as I caught sight of her, and at first I thought her activity had been aroused by the shot which saved my life, but I've now reached the conclusion that she was merely making a perfunctory trip around the island."

"Then you think if we escape observation on this run we will be safe for some hours?"

"I am quite sure of it, so far as those on the boat are concerned. But what is the boat doing here? It is a government boat, used by officials in making tours of inspection. Perhaps the high brows at Manila are wise to what is going on here, and have sent the *Miles* to look into the matter. Then we're left, eh?"

As the *Manhattan* was now nosing her way into the mouth of the little stream referred to by Pat, and Ned was fully occupied in working her in, he made no reply to the suggestions thus presented. However, he was studying over the proposition with a wish in his breast that the *Miles* might not be at that time in the legitimate service of the government.

He was virtually disobeying the positive orders of Major John Ross in cruising about in the *Manhattan* at that time. If he had obeyed instructions he would doubtless be in Manila now awaiting the slow unwinding of red tape, instead of there in the channel. He had taken the bit in his teeth and desired to "make good."

Besides, he was satisfied that the government officers, if the *Miles* really was there on an official mission, would merely disperse the native chiefs if they were discovered and permit the plotters to escape. This would only put off the day of final action, for the chiefs would continue to assemble and discuss the treaty until the Philippines were in a blaze of war or the men who were urging them on were in prison.

"There," said Frank, presently, "no person out there in the bay can get a look at us so long as we remain here."

Indeed the harbor was an ideal hiding place. The stream turned sharply to the east from its northerly course just before it reached the white beach, ran a few yards in that direction, and then turned north once more and emptied into the sea. This placed a dense growth of jungle between the beach and the position taken by the *Manhattan*, which had passed into the channel running east and west and was effectively screened from view on either side by the growths of the jungle.

As soon as the boat was in the position desired, Ned crossed the arm of land lying between the stream and the beach and looked out with his glass. The *Miles* passed while he stood there, the American flag flying from her masthead. When he went back to the *Manhattan* there was a troubled look on his face.

"She's on government service, all right," he said to Pat and Frank, "I saw men in uniform on her deck."

"I didn't see anybody land," said Pat.

"Did she communicate with the shore in any way?" asked Ned.

"Well, there were native boats plying about and they might have taken some of the brown men off to her."

"It is all of a piece with the counterfeit instructions," Ned said. "There is an unknown interest working in this case. If the officers at Manila suspected or had wind of what is going on here, why didn't they send a troop ship and capture the chiefs, and so screen out the men responsible for the conspiracy?"

"That's another thing we've got to find out," Frank said, with a grin. "We've got a good many things to find out!"

"And the first thing to discover," Ned said, "is what has become of the boys."

"Right you are!" cried Pat. "I'll go back to the top of the hill and see if there's any commotion on the island."

"What does the island look like?" asked Frank.

"Looks like a valley with a line of hills shutting it in. Looks like a saucer with a high rim. The dago chiefs are encamped in the middle of the saucer."

"In a thicket, of course?"

"It is quite free from jungle growths down there," was the reply—"so clear that I was able to see the encampment and the people moving about. And I think I saw the treaty box, at that!"

"Treaty box?" laughed Frank. "Don't you ever think these brown men have any box to put their treaty in!"

"What do you think about it, Ned?" asked Pat.

"I hardly think they unlock their pocket-books with keys like the one I found," replied Ned. "And, besides," he added, "the white men back of this conspiracy would naturally want a treaty signed up with all the ceremony that could be hatched up, in order to impress the chiefs. Yes, I think there must be a treaty box!"

"And you think you've got a key to it?" asked Frank.

"I've got a key to something," was the reply.

Frank opened his lips to make some remark, but Ned laid a hand on his arm and drew closer to him so that a low voice might be heard, at the same time motioning to Pat to remain quiet.

"Now, don't move, or turn to look," Ned said, "but in a few seconds, after I have turned away, look, casually, toward the great balete tree which rises above the jungle straight to the south."

Ned turned away directly and faced the jungle to the north.

"What do you see?" he asked, turning toward the boys again but not looking at them.

"Monkeys wiggling in the creepers," Frank said.

"Filipinos," answered Pat.

"How many?" asked Ned.

"Well," replied Pat, "I thought I saw two, but I guess there is only one. We've got to get him," he added.

"Of course!" Frank said. "If we don't, he'll go back to camp and tell about seeing us here; then they'll swarm down on us, and it will be all off with the whole bunch of us. We've got to get him!"

"But how?" asked Pat.

In the short silence that followed all three boys cudgeled their brains for some idea which might serve, but the case was assuming a hopeless aspect when a shrill voice in pretty good English came from the tree.

"Hi, there!" cried the voice.

"If that's Jimmie, made up as a little brown man," Pat said, "I'll beat him up when he comes aboard."

"More likely to be Jack," said Frank.

"Hi, there!" repeated the voice from the tree.

"That's not Jimmie, or Jack either," Ned said. "What do you want?" he asked.

The reply came in the form of a feline growl which might have issued forth from the throat of a wild cat.

"What does the badge say?" asked the voice, then.

The boys looked at each other in wonder for a moment and then Ned answered:

"Be prepared!"

"Now, what do you think of that?" Pat demanded. "What do you think of meeting a Boy Scout out here?"

"What patrol?" asked Frank, half doubting whether the person in the tree would find the correct answer.

"Wild Cat, Manila!" came the reply.

"Then come out of the tree, Wild Cat," Ned laughed, "and tell us how you came to be here."

There was a great rustling of foliage, and then a Filipino boy not more than fourteen years of age appeared on the trunk. He worked his way down and disappeared in the jungle. In a moment, however, he made his appearance on the margin of the little stream and was on board.

He was a rather good looking young fellow, with keen eyes and a lithe, muscular figure. He

was well dressed in a suit of light material, and wore a Boy Scout badge on the lapel of his coat.

"We're gettin so we find 'em in the woods!" Frank said, as the boy stepped on the bridge deck. "Did you come to the island on the steamer which just passed here?" he added, as the lad looked about him with a grin.

"Yes," was the reply. "Come as servant."

"Well, why aren't you on board now?" asked Frank, suspiciously.

"Run away!" was the short reply.

"What for?" demanded Frank, determined to know all that there was to know about the new-comer, and urged on by Ned's nods, which told him to proceed.

"Tired of city," was the grinning reply.

As the boy spoke he turned around to the jungle and waved his hand, as if taking it all in at one motion. Then he laid a finger on his own breast and said:

"That for mine!"

"I'm afraid you've been in bad company," laughed Frank. "You're talking slang! What's your name?"

"Minda," was the reply.

"Sounds like a girl's name," grunted Pat. "What are the chiefs doing on the island?"

"Conference," was the reply.

"They're forming a confederacy, are they?"

Minda shook his head and looked perplexed.

"Don't know," he replied.

"Where are the two Scouts who went ashore a long time ago?" asked Ned.

"Tied," replied Minda, crossing his wrists to indicate what he meant.

"That's nice!" Pat broke in. "Where are they?"

Again Minda shook his head, saying that he did not know where the boys were, that they might have been put on board the steamer.

"So the officers on board the steamer communicated with the shore?" asked Ned.

"Yes; that's how I got away," was the reply.

"Do the officers know what is going on?" continued Ned. Again Minda shook his head.

"I reckon you're off there," Pat exclaimed. "They do know, and the man in charge on board the steamer is a traitor! I know him!"

Again the Filipino looked puzzled.

"Good man!" he said, and sat down on the bridge deck.

"Do you really believe the boys were put on board the steamer?" asked Frank of Ned, in a moment.

"I think the native chiefs would put us all on board the steamer, if they could do so," was the reply.

Then the patrol leader turned to Minda again.

"What did the steamer come down here for?" he asked.

"Patrol," was the reply.

"On no special mission?" Ned went on.

"Just to patrol," was the reply.

"I don't believe it!" Frank burst out. "That boat was sent down here to investigate this conspiracy matter, and the man in command is making a perfunctory job of it. He'll then go back to Manila and report nothing doing!"

"And the conspiracy will go on, and there'll be war!" Pat added.

"Just so!" Frank commented.

"Well," Ned said, "we can't find out whether you are right or not by asking the officers, either on the steamer or at Manila. We've got to find out by watching the brown men! We've got to leave the *Manhattan* here and go into the jungle and see what is going on, and find out what company the chiefs receive. It is my idea that some of the men in uniform are leading double lives!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SENATOR'S SON SEEKS A KEY.

Jimmie and Jack were lying behind a great flowing vine which swung from a balete tree, looking keenly out in the direction in which they believed the camp to be situated, when four lusty men who appeared to be Filipinos crept noiselessly out of the jungle and sat down on their backs with chuckles of satisfaction.

'Quit it!" roared Jimmie, thinking they had been followed from the boat.

Then he saw it was no joke, for Jack was floundering about, and one of the little brown men was tying his hands with a hard cord. He flopped over on his back and looked up into the sinister face of a native.

"What's comin' off here?" demanded the boy, trying hard to get a glimpse of Jack from where he lay.

"We're pinched!" Jack called out.

Then the two were dragged hastily to their feet and pushed through the jungle toward the camp. Jimmie thought this a place for optimism, and decided to try it on the low-browed

chap who was rather rudely forcing him along. I was just thinking of going down to see your camp," he said with a grin, "but I didn't know the way exactly. I'm glad you happened along. I've got the left hind foot of a rabbit that was caught by a black cat at midnight, in the dark of the moon, in a negro cemetery, on the grave of a black man who was hanged for murder. Guess that's brought me luck."

"You'll need four rabbits' feet if you get out of this," Jack grumbled. "Suppose we take a quick hike for the boat, right now?" he added, believing the Filipinos would not be able to understand English.

In this he was mistaken, for one of the men said:

"Don't you ever try it. Your left hind foot won't protect you if you do."

The boys gazed about the group, now halted, trying to pick out the speaker.

"But this is a magic rabbit-foot," Jimmie retorted, scornfully as if any sane person ought to know of the virtues of a left hind rabbit-foot. "It used to be owned by an armless man who rowed over the Great American Desert in an open boat!"

This, of course, was all for the purpose of inducing the one who had spoken in English to speak again, in order that he might be sorted out of the others. Jimmie's imaginative powers proved equal to the occasion.

A man who, regarded closely, did not look at all like a Filipino—a slender, though broad-shouldered, man with sharp gray eyes and the awkward manner of one unused to disguise—laughed lightly at the boy's odd conceit and said:

"That will be about enough of that Bowery lingo. What are you boys doing here?" he added.

"We came over to see about puttin' up a couple of skyscrapers!" replied Jimmie. "The air seems nice an' high here. Guess we wouldn't have to push it up any to build fifty stories. Where you takin' us?" he went on. "If I owned this shrubbery we're borin' through, I'd have it manicured."

"Where did you leave the *Manhattan?*" asked the other, without taking the trouble to answer Jimmie's question.

"We didn't leave her," Jimmie lied, cheerfully arguing with himself that it wasn't any of the other man's business where they had left the

boat. "She's left us, an' gone off on a cruise to the South; left us to reign on this island. She'll be back in a couple of days, an' then you'll get what's comin' to you."

"I'm glad you took over the government of the island," the other laughed. "Only for your appearance here we should not have known about the *Manhattan* being in these waters. Now we can look her up. We have a steamer here for that purpose."

"I guess I ought to have remained on board," Jimmie said, ruefully.

"It is a wonder that Nestor permitted you to leave the boat," observed the other. "It is said of the lad that he makes few mistakes," he went on, glancing from one boy to the other.

"So you know Ned, do you?" asked Jack. "Well, you know a good fellow. If you stay about here you'll be likely to know more about him before long."

"Oh, I mean to remain," was the cool reply. "Nestor is wanted at Manila for disobeying orders, and I'll take him along with me when I go. There's a steamer out here looking for him."

The boys knew that Ned had left Manila in defiance of the orders of Major John Ross, but they did not believe that a steamer had been sent

out to arrest him. They knew that he had received his original orders from Washington, and believed that when Ross communicated with the authorities there he would be instructed to keep his hands off so far as Ned was concerned.

The man was, of course, lying, doubtless in the hope of creating the impression in the minds of the boys that he was still in the service of the government, and there on official business. The boys had no fear of their leader being taken back to Manila under arrest. They were more concerned for his life if he fell into the hands of this traitor.

"You know a fat lot about it," Jack said, disdainfully. "What you know about Ned's business won't swell your head any. Where's this steamer you're talking about?"

"I suspect," replied the other, "that she is now circling the island in order to pick up the *Manhattan*. Nestor was wrong to run away with a government boat. He'll serve time for it, I reckon."

"I suppose," Jimmie said, in as sarcastic a tone as he could bring forth, "that you're lookin' among these bushes for the *Manhattan*. She might have climbed one of these big trees," he added, with a grin.

The leader made no reply, none being required, and the party pressed forward toward the center of the island. The jungle grew thinner as they advanced, and presently the encampment came into view.

It was evident to the boys that some of the native chiefs were there in state, for some of the tents—doubtless stolen from the government—were gaudily decorated, and attendants were flying about as if their lives depended on the speed with which they covered the ground. It seemed to the boys that there could not be less than three hundred persons present, and the decorated tents, marking the stopping place of a chief, indicated a large collection of native rulers.

The boys were not taken through the encampment, but led into a tent on the outskirts, where they were securely tied up and left alone.

"Cripes!" Jimmie said, when the flap of the tent fell behind the figure of the disguised man, "this reminds me of a drammer we used to have on the good old Bowery. In this play there was a girl that was always bein' captured an' rescued. Any scene that didn't witness a couple of captures and a couple of rescues was no good. This is just like that. We're bein' captured, all right, but we ain't bein' rescued—not just yet!"

"Ned's somewhere about," Jack said, confidently. "He'll manage to turn us loose before long."

Then through the jungle, and ringing snappingly on the clear air, came the snorting of the *Manhattan's* engines. At that moment she was entering the little creek which Pat had pointed out. In a moment the explosions ceased.

"If they didn't know before," Jack said, "they know now. It won't take them long to geezle the *Manhattan* now. Say," he added, "roll over here and eat these cords. If I could get down to them I'd soon be free."

"I wonder if I could?" asked Jimmie.

The cords were hard and strong and tightly knotted, but after a long time the boy succeeded in releasing Jack's hands, and the rest was easy as they were alone in the tent. In a very short time both boys were free of bonds.

The tent did not seem to be guarded, as the captors doubtless believed escape from the island impossible, even if the boys succeeded in getting away from the camp. They did not know, of course, that the member of the Wild Cat Patrol from Manila had noted the capture of the lads, and had started away to notify their friends as soon as the explosions heard so plainly by the

boys notified him of the whereabouts of the *Manhattan.*

Jimmie and Jack remained quietly in the tent for some moments after their freedom from their bonds had been gained, then Jimmie crawled to the wall nearest the center of the camp, lifted the canvas and looked out. He crouched there a moment and then dropped the canvas and turned to his chum.

"You remember the night in Yokohama?" he asked.

"I should say so," Jack replied. "Didn't I wait around a bum old hotel until almost morning for you to come back?"

"Well," Jimmie went on, "the man that sat in disguise in the tea house, and the men who were there with him, are out there."

Jack approached the little opening made by the lifting of the canvas and looked out.

"Which one?" he asked. "Which one was disguised!"

"The military-lookin' chap," was the reply.

"On the night them gazabos chased us down the Street of a Thousand Steps he was made up like a Jap. When we came to the marines he ducked, as if afraid of Uncle Sam's uniforms."

"Ned rather thought he'd be down to this conference," Jack said.

The man to whom the boy called special attention was in the garb of a civilian, but the military manner was unmistakable. He now stood talking with half a dozen Filipinos, occasionally pointing to the eastern coast of the island.

"He's sendin' his natives after the *Manhattan*, all right," Jimmie said. "There's goin' to be somethin' doin here before long. Look who's here!" he added, as a young man of perhaps twenty-five sauntered toward the tent.

Under his arm the young man carried a steel box, like those used as receptacles for cash and important papers in safe deposit vaults. The box seemed to be quite heavy, for the young man frequently shifted it from one side to the other.

"There's your treaty box!" laughed Jack, poking Jimmie in the ribs.

"It may be, at that," the boy replied.

The young man passed from group to group in front of the tents, apparently seeking some one. Occasionally he pointed to the keyhole of the box and the others felt in their pockets.

"He's lost the key to the treaty box," Jimmie grinned.

"Probably he's got cigarettes in there and wants to dope himself with one," Jack replied.

"Anyway," Jimmie went on, "I wish Ned was here. I'll bet he could open that box for him."

"Now he's talking with the man who chased you out of the tea house in the Street of a Thousand Steps," Jack said, "and the fellow is raving about something."

"They can't open the treaty box!" laughed Jimmie.

"You'll be seeing things next," Jack grunted. "Now, what do you think of that?" he added. "The chap is bringing his box here."

"Then fix yourself up so you'll look like you was in captivity," Jimmie advised. "If he finds out we've released ourselves he'll tie us up again."

The boys found pieces of the cord with which they had been tied and managed to put up a very fair imitation of being bound good and hard. When the young man entered the tent he stood over them for a moment with a supercilious grin on his face.

"How do you like it, boys?" he finally asked.

"Fine!" Jimmie sang out.

"Isn't it most dinner time?" Jack added.

The young man sat down on a bundle of freshly cut grass, placed the box by his side, placed his chin on his hands, his elbows on his knees, and sat for some moments regarding the boys with an amused smile on his rather weak face.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"We're doin' acrobatic stunts on a high wire just now," scorned Jimmie.

"Don't get gay, now," the other growled. "I'm the son of a United States senator."

"I'm the sister of the sun an' moon," Jimmie replied. "So don't be givin' me no guff."

"You're a cheeky little baggage," the son of the senator replied, rising to his feet.

"You might leave that box here," Jimmie called out, "if it's got anythin' to eat in it. We could eat a crocodile."

"Be careful that the crocodiles don't eat you," warned the other and, seizing the box in a firmer grasp, walked out of the tent.

"What do you make of it?" asked Jack.

"The son of a senator," Jimmie replied, "is here representin' some big interest, an' that's the treaty box he's got. Say, if they ever get all these native kings an' queens an' prime ministers to goin', there'll be bloody war in the Phil-

ippines, an' Japan, or China, or Germany, or France will butt in, an' there'll be a fine time."

"Of course," Jack replied. "That's why we've got to stop it."

"It might be stopped by scatterin' these chiefs, an' kings, an' all the rest," Jimmie concluded.

"Not so you could notice it," Jack insisted. "Didn't we scatter them when they met on that other island? Well, they've come together again, haven't they? I've heard Ned say that the only way to stop this thing is to get a good grip on the man at the head of it. The thing now is to find who that man is."

"I should say so, with the military men all mixed up in it!" Jimmie said. "It seems to me that the head of it must be in Washington, in Manila, or in Yokohama. I wish Ned was here."

"Tied up?" echoed Jack. "If he was, we'd never get out. Let me tell you this, little man," he went on, the tan on his cheeks showing browner than ever against the sudden paleness of his face, "let me tell you this: These men are here in the guise of soldiers to put this treaty through. These chiefs think they represent men high up in our government. If they didn't think so they wouldn't listen.

"When it is all over, and war has been declared, and our title to the islands has gone up in smoke, these traitors will go back to their posts in the army. Now, this being the case, they won't want to see us around, will they?"

"Hardly," was the reply.

Jimmie saw what his chum was coming to and opened his eyes wider than ever.

"You mean," he added, "that when the ruction breaks out, or even before, we'll be put out of the way?"

"Of course."

"Then I'm goin' to duck right now!" Jimmie said, moving toward the wall of the tent. "I'm not goin' to stay here an' be bolo meat. If we can get to the first thicket we stand a chance of gettin' to the *Manhattan*."

"That's all right, but it won't do," Jack said. "Don't you suppose these gazabos heard the fuss the engine was makin'? Well, then! But we've got to go somewheres, so come on. Me for a point opposite to the direction of the sounds we heard."

There was a sudden commotion in the camp just then, and the boys reached the first thicket.

CHAPTER XV.

SIGNAL LIGHTS IN THE CHINA SEA.

The boys reached the first thicket and quickly disappeared from the sight of those in the camp. There they listened for an instant, but heard nothing which sounded like pursuit. Then they dug into the jungle and worked around toward the bay where they had left the *Manhattan*.

There came no alarm from the camp as they passed through the thickets, using only their hands in fighting the creepers and snake-like vines. It was afterwards learned that the arrival of a particularly powerful chief had caused the commotion which had so assisted in the escape.

Luckily the attentions paid to the new arrival stretched over a long period of time, otherwise the boys would certainly have been retaken. Disturbed by the noise made by the lads in pushing through the jungle, the monkeys, birds, and other creatures of the forest lifted up their voices and seemed to point out the path of flight. Jimmie declared that a brass band could have done no more to locate them.

It was after noon when they came to the little bay where they had left the *Manhattan.* There was the bay, shimmering in the sun, there was the beach where they had landed. But where was the motor boat?

"They've had to run for it," Jimmie decided, gazing gloomily over the waste of sea and back to the jungle. "What's the next move? This spot must be watched, so we've got to get out of here. I guess we're in for it, all right."

The situation seemed to be a desperate one, and the boys crept back into the jungle to study it out. If the *Manhattan* had left the vicinity of the island there was no hope for them; still, they decided to make sure that it had before giving over the search for it. In considering the situation they did not at all censure Ned, for they saw that he might have been obliged to take the *Manhattan* away from the little bay in order to avoid capture.

At last when, in their tracing of the coast in the faint hope of finally coming upon the *Manhattan,* the boys came upon the little stream where the boat was hidden, they remained concealed from the sight of those on board while they took careful note of the surroundings. It did not seem possible that the *Manhattan* had not

been discovered by the Filipinos, and naturally the boys suspected that some trick to gain possession of her without an open fight was being worked.

The boat lay quietly drawing at the cable which held her to the bank of the little stream, with everything apparently in order in the cockpit and in the cabin, but there were at first no signs of the boys. Presently, however, Pat's red head shot up out of the cockpit, where he had evidently been lying down.

As the head appeared, an arrow whizzed almost over the heads of the watching boys and struck the side of the boat with a force which seemed equal to cutting a hole in it. Pat was out of sight in a moment, with the cabin door closed behind him.

"Going back to old methods, are they?" whispered Jack. "Do you see anything of Ned or Frank there?"

Jimmie shook his head.

"I'm afraid they've gone to look us up," he said, "an' in that case, their return to the boat is likely to bring about a fight."

The battle was on in a moment, for Ned, Frank and the Filipino boy were now approaching the boat. It was decidedly a desperate

charge they were making through the jungle when shots from the right of the pursuers caused the latter to believe that their peril lay in that direction.

When the Filipinos turned to beat off this attack Ned and his companions made a rush for the boat and reached her in safety. Then the Filipinos rushed to the bank, a dozen or more of them, in a rash attempt to board the *Manhattan*.

They were met by a hot fire from the cabin and the cockpit as soon as they came out on the little rim of clear space on the bank and turned to the thicket for shelter only to meet a volley of revolver shots from the interior. This was too much for the untrained natives to endure, and they fled up the shore of the stream and disappeared.

The boys themselves were uninjured, but spots of blood on the shore and on the leaves indicated that their bullets had not all gone astray. The wounded natives, however, had been carried off by their companions.

Of course those on the boat understood where the fire which had assisted them had come from. Jimmie and Jack were the only persons on the island who would be apt to come to their aid.

"Come out of that!" Frank called, as the

last Filipino disappeared. "Don't stay there in the thicket all day! We've got to get out!"

"Why don't you get out, then?" demanded Jimmie, with a grin. "We'll stay here an' run things while you are gone."

The boys were soon on board and the *Manhattan* was worked out into the channel. But before she was far away from the shore a volley of shots came from the jungle, doing no damage except to the beauty of the craft.

"Now run!" advised Jack. "The steamer over on the other side can chase the legs off us if given half a chance."

Frank took charge of the engine, and Jack stood by to see that he did the right thing, and the boat purred through the waters at a speed which she had never been called upon to make before. Presently the steamer showed up, pumping great columns of smoke into the sweet air, and the chase was on in earnest.

Ned directed Frank to seek the shelter of a group of islands not far away and sat down to talk with Jimmie, first explaining to the two who had just come aboard how the Filipino Boy Scout came to be there.

"We can't miss 'em!" Jimmie exclaimed, shaking the Filipino warmly by the hand. "We

found Boy Scouts in Mexico, and in the Canal Zone, and now in the Philippines. They hop out on us wherever we go, like 'skeeters!"

There was now a long and serious talk concerning the course to be pursued. Jimmie and Jack told of meeting the man who had been followed to Yokohama, and also of the senator's son and the box he carried. The Filipino told what he knew of the plans of those on board the steamer, now gradually drawing away from them.

"Are you sure that the men in charge of the steamer are American military men?" asked Ned.

"Sure!" was the reply. "I came from Manila with them."

"And they are in the service of the government?"

"Sure!"

"Then what are they doing on that island, in company with the insurgent chiefs?" demanded Frank, but the Filipino only shook his head.

He insisted that Lieutenant Carstens, who was in command of the vessel from which the steam launch had come, was a fine officer, and high in the esteem of the Manila authorities.

"Then what is he monkeyin' with the rebel chiefs for?" demanded Jimmie. "It looks to

me like Uncle Sam was goin' to get the double cross."

"Why don't you go back to the steamer," asked Pat of Ned, "and go on board?"

"That would be fine!" cried Jack.

"What could they do to him?" demanded Frank.

"That boat is here to make trouble for me," Ned said, in a moment. "I can't understand what is going on, but I know that it would not be safe for me to go on board."

"For why?" asked Jack.

"I should be accused of murder," was the grave reply.

"For shootin' the dagoes who were shootin' at you?" demanded Jimmie.

"That will be the charge," Ned replied.

"Then we'll become pirates!" Jack cried. "We'll sail the raving deep and get a new plank for prisoners to walk as soon as the old one wears out. We'll be bold, bad men on the Spanish main!"

"Cut it out!" Frank said. "This is no joke. They've got the goods on us for that shooting, and we've got to keep out of the way until Ned discovers the inner workings of this red tape machine."

The truth of this statement was so apparent that there was little more argument on the subject. It seemed that, in trying to defend the government against a gang of conspirators and traitors, Ned had indeed come to a point of open rupture with some of the men in authority.

For some unknown reason they were chasing him down. Twice he had come to the spot where the treasonable document was to be executed, and twice he had been driven away without accomplishing the object he sought to accomplish.

About the middle of the afternoon the government steamer disappeared entirely, leaving the *Manhattan* alone in the network of tiny islands which came down pretty close to the northern shore of the island of Luzon. Ned watched the last trace of her smoke disappear with much the same feeling that one experiences when an enemy he has been fighting passes from view but does not leave the vicinity.

"She's getting ready to spring out on us," he said to Frank. "She is either waiting for night, or she has gone back to dig up a gunboat. Those on board of her have good ground for arresting us, and before we could prove the true

state of affairs at the time of the shooting the treaty would be signed and war would be on."

"If we only had that treaty box!" Jimmie exclaimed.

"And the senator's son with it!" Jack put in.

The steamer gave them no more trouble that day, and when night fell the *Manhattan* nosed into a creek which rippled into the channel and the boys prepared to pass the night there. It was a still night and there was no moon, but would be later on. The air, heavy with tropical scents, scarcely stirred, the light breeze having gone down at sunset.

The island which the boys had selected as a resting place for the night was well up to the north of Luzon and faced the China Sea. There seemed to be no land between its western coast and the shoreline of China. Far out in the sea the lights of a liner gleamed for an instant as the boys carried provisions ashore, then the great expanse of water showed only the light of the stars.

"We may have to lug this stuff back to the boat with a rush," laughed Jimmie, as he carried a basket of tinned provisions from the rowboat to the little glade where they were to prepare

supper. "I don't believe the government steamer went very far away. If she did, she'll come back with a gunboat."

"Imagine a gunboat out here after the *Manhattan!*" scoffed Jack. "All the steamer people wanted was to drive us away. Don't you think they could have caught us if they had set out to? You bet they could! But they didn't want to show up before us. There are people on board of her who do not want to be seen in the society they have been in during the past few days."

Ned looked the speaker over thoughtfully for a moment.

"I think," he said, "that you've about hit the nail on the head. They wanted to drive us away, and they didn't want their own boat in the way to-night."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Frank.

"I'm not very clear in my mind as to what I did mean," laughed Ned. "However, it is plain that the steamer did not relish staying about here."

Ned watched the supper preparations for a short time and then walked away toward the interior. The island was a very small one, and consisted chiefly of a round rim of white sand—which was rock pounded up by the beating of the

waves—and a rocky, cone-like elevation which lifted above the waters of the China Sea like a signal tower.

In some distant epoch the bit of rock had been cast up from the bottom of the ocean, and the rains and suns of countless years had formed from the volcanic material the thin soil which here and there supported tropical growths.

Sailors called the island "Elephant's Head," because the central elevation was said to resemble in some remote degree the head of an elephant, and because two great ridges of rock jutted out into the water, pointing toward the coast of China. These ridges formed an excellent harbor, and were known as "The Tusks."

The *Manhattan* was not anchored in this secure harbor, but in a bay which was formed by a break in the rock just around the south corner of the island. There were springs high up on the mountain, and these formed the river which had in turn worn away the rock and shaped the bay.

Ned reached the place where the climb began in five minutes after leaving the camp-fire. There was no jungle to speak of and he walked rapidly. He passed on up the steep side of the mountain for some distance and then paused on a

little shelf of rock which faced the west and took out his glass.

Before him lay the quiet waters of the great China Sea, while back of him loomed the rugged bulk of the mountain, the summit indistinct in the darkness of the moonless night. The growths of the tropics came up to where he stood and then died out from lack of soil. Elephant's Head stood out boldly, its rugged lines unsoftened by the growths which flourish almost everywhere in the Philippines.

Below, Ned could see the red of the campfire, sheltered from the sea side by a screen of bushes. Away to the west he could see, at first, nothing, and then a light came dancing over the waves. At first he thought he must be mistaken, but the light remained stationery except that it seemed to rock with the slow movement of the waves.

While the boy was wondering over the matter Pat came scrambling up the side of the mountain. He threw himself on the shelf of rock by Ned's side and pointed out to the west.

"You see that light?" he asked.

"Yes; I was just wondering about it," was the reply.

"It is at the top of a tall mast," Pat went on to explain, "and is a signal. I can't read it, of course, but it seems to me that it means mischief."

"I have no doubt of it," was the reply, "but we've got to wait for developments for a time. This seems to me to be a waiting game," he added with a laugh which did not sound at all merry.

The boys sat for a long time, watching the light, which grew nearer, and the campfire below, which was still glowing brightly. Then Ned turned his glass to the north and an exclamation of surprise escaped him. Where he looked there was a duplicate of the light to the west, and that, also, was drawing closer.

"I think," Ned said, after calling Pat's attention to the second light, "that we'd better have that fire out. Go down and ask the boys to finish their suppers and make everything dark."

"Why," Pat said, "you haven't any notion those ships are coming here, have you?"

"There's a pretty good harbor here," Ned said.

"Yes, but—"

"And the insurrectos must have arms," Ned went on.

Pat thumped his hands down on his knees half a dozen times and then brought one palm down on Ned's shoulder.

"Sure!" he said. "Sure, sure, sure! The game is to land arms and ammunition here to-night! Now, what do you think of tumbling headfirst into the center of the disturbance like this? Say, we'll have to receipt for those guns!"

CHAPTER XVI.

FOR PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS.

The boys hastened down to the campfire and quickly extinguished it, much to the disgust of Jimmie, who had begun the preparation of an elaborate meal—at least as elaborate as could be gotten together out of tin cans.

This precaution taken, the *Manhattan* was towed into the mouth of the little creek and climbers and creepers drawn over her until no one would have suspected her presence there. The engine was not set in motion in making this change because of the danger from the explosions.

All this accomplished, Ned and Pat climbed back to the shelf of rock and again looked out over the mysterious China Sea. There were the two lights, one to the west and one to the north. They were closer to the island than before, however, and the light up toward Formosa was drawing to the south rapidly.

"They are going to meet here, all right," Pat said, "and I'll go apples to snowballs that

they've got arms for the insurrectos. The manager of this enterprise never let all those chiefs get away from that other island without signing the treaty, and now he's sneaking in guns to help them out."

The boys discussed the situation for some moments, the lights coming nearer with astonishing rapidity. At length another light showed away to the south and west, but not such a light as the others.

It was not high up in the air, like the others, and directly it seemed to divide itself into half a dozen points. Its progress toward the island seemed to be even faster than that of the others.

"That's a steamer," Ned said, after a long look through his glass.

"The other lights are on steamers, too," Pat replied. "No wind-jammer could make the time, in this calm, that those boats are making."

While the boys looked the lights went out, or appeared to, and there was only the glimmer of the unfamiliar constellations of the heavens over the China Sea.

"That's strange!"

Pat turned to Ned and grasped him by the arm.

"What do you make of it?" he continued.

"That may be a signal," was the reply.

"If it is, the glims will show again directly."

"They may," was the reply.

But the lights did not show again, and, after waiting for an hour or more, the boys started back to the camp. Half way down, the dull, reverberating boom of a cannon came to their ears, over the water.

"What does that mean?" asked Pat.

"It may be the gunboat Jimmie insisted would be sent for me," smiled Ned.

"You don't really think that?"

"Hardly," was the reply, "but I don't know what to make of it."

"Perhaps it was a command for the other ships to show their lights," Pat suggested.

"I hope Uncle Sam is becoming wise to the game that is being played down here," Ned said, "and has sent a gunboat to look into it."

"That's it!" cried Pat. "That's just it! If she doesn't pass the ships in the dark there'll be something doing here."

The dull boom of the gun came again, and, far out, the low lights of the gunboat showed above the water. She seemed to be passing swiftly to the north.

"She's going to pass us, all right!" Pat cried. "Now, what did she make that noise for? To warn the ships that she was coming, and to get out of the way?"

"There's some good reason," Ned replied.

In a moment a searchlight shot out from the gunboat and prowled over the sea. The boys could see it moving about, but could not see that it picked up the ships which had previously shown the lights. One of the vessels, it appeared, was too far to the south and the other too far to the north to be reached by the traveling rays from the gunboat.

"She's slowing down!" Pat cried, in a moment. "She's going to search the islands. Glory be!"

"You may not want to meet her people, after you find out what they want," said Ned. "Remember that battle with the Filipinos back there."

"I'm willing to take chances with them," was the reply.

The boys now hastened back to camp and Ned passed on to the creek where the *Manhattan* lay in hiding.

"Jimmie," he said, turning to face that young gentleman, "do you remember whether those

rockets we bought at Manila were put on board?"

"Sure they were!" was the reply. "Want 'em?"

Ned replied that he did, and the boy went prospecting in the lockers of the boat.

"Got 'em!" he cried presently.

"Do you know how to send them off?" asked Ned.

"Do I? Well, if you'd ever seen me bossin' the fireworks at Tompkins Square, in little old N. Y., I guess you wouldn't ask that!"

Just then Jack came blundering along through the brush and half fell into the boat.

"You'd make a fine scout!" Jimmie said. "You move through the thickets with the stealth and grace of an elephant!"

"What's that firing about?" asked Jack, paying no attention to the boy and facing Ned anxiously, his face only half seen in the semi-darkness.

"That is what I want you to find out," was the reply. "I want you and Jimmie to put the boat in running condition, everything ready for a spurt of speed. And I want you to remain here in the boat, ready to shoot out in a second."

"All right! That's easy."

"You may have to wait a long time," Ned went on, "and you may have to go inside of five minutes. When you go, muffle the engine as much as possible, but run like the Old Nick was after you—run for the gunboat out there!"

"They'll pinch me!" wailed Jimmie.

"And when you get to the gunboat," Ned continued, "tell the officer in charge that Nestor is a prisoner on this island, and that the insurrectos are about to land guns and ammunition here."

"You a prisoner!" Jack echoed. "What's the use of lying about it?"

"I shall be a prisoner by the time you reach the gunboat," Ned said, coolly—as calmly as if he had been announcing that he would be taking his supper at that time.

"If you go in the *Manhattan*," Jack said, "you won't be a prisoner here."

"But I've got to stay here," Ned said, "and besides, the boat must not be loaded down. She may have to make a hot run for the gunboat."

"I don't know what you're up to," Jack said, doubtfully, "but I guess you do, so I'll do just as you say."

"What about the rockets?" asked Jimmie.

"They are to be used in signaling the gunboat," Ned replied. "She may be a long ways off when you get out there."

When the boys at the camp had finished their supper, eaten in the darkness, and watched the sea for signs of the ships for half an hour, they started toward the boat. Then another shot came over the water, followed by two more, fired in quick succession. Ned joined them instantly, for, following the shots, the rattle of sailing gear and the thud-thud of boxes or boards on a deck echoed over the sea.

"One of the ships is close in," Ned said. "Now we'll see if the owners are unloading missionaries here!"

The vessel close in looked like an old-fashioned top-sail schooner; still there was an engine and a propeller. She was a three-master, and looked, in the uncertain light, as if she had been in service in the East for a long time.

She glided into the harbor between the Tusks as if she knew every inch of the channel, and brought up close to a flat surface of rock on one of the Tusks, which formed a natural pier. Then the hatches were opened, and shaded lanterns gleamed about the deck.

Ned glanced back over the mountain, and was astonished at seeing a green signal light there, almost at the top. The men on the schooner saw the signal, too, for Ned could see them pointing at it, could hear them laughing as if a great point had been gained.

"Wonder why we didn't see that?" asked Frank. "It must have been there when the lights showed from the ships."

"We didn't go up high enough, or it might not have been there when we were looking," was the reply.

"Well," Frank said, then, "if we didn't see the chap who is tending that light on the mountain, he must have seen us; or if he didn't see us he must have heard the engine of the *Manhattan* doing her talking stunt."

"Probably," replied Ned.

The matter was more serious than his manner indicated, for he turned quickly and walked toward the *Manhattan*, calling out softly to Pat as he did so. There was no answer for a moment, and then it came in the shape of a dozen pistol shots.

Ned dropped down behind a clump of bushes and waited for an instant, resolved to know what

was going on at the boat before advancing. Then the boys from the camp came running up, asking questions, and all made a rush for the boat.

When they came within sight of the spot where she lay, they saw that she was moving out into the bay, and that Pat was standing by the engine whirling the fly-wheel. On the shore were a score of Filipinos, standing with guns turned toward the boat.

The boys saw Ned and Frank spring forward, saw them hesitate an instant, and then drop to the ground. The *Manhattan* swung out into the bay with engines snapping and propeller churning the smooth waters.

"Whoop—ee!" shouted Pat from the deck.

"Got her off all right!" shouted Jimmie. "Nobody hurt!"

"Straight to the Northwest," shouted Ned. "and keep your rockets going!"

"I wish we had been able to get on board," Frank said, regretfully, as the *Manhattan* showed a clean pair of heels out of the bay. "I saw Jack on her."

"The boys on board have their instructions," Ned said, "and now we may as well be getting

out of range of these little brown men! If Pat and the others hadn't been on their guard the boat would have been captured."

The moon was rising now, almost at full, and brought the natives, standing on the beach, out in full relief. They were well armed, and seemed very angry at the turn matters had taken. They had evidently been sent out to capture the boat, and were not pleased at the report they would now be obliged to make.

They stood looking out at the fast receding boat for only a moment before opening fire on her. Directly, however, the *Manhattan* was out of range, and then they turned their attention to Ned's party, which, being hidden by the thicket, might not have been discovered at that time only for the instructions shouted out by Ned as the boat slid away.

Knowing that he would be between two fires if a battle opened, Ned made no show of resistance when the natives approached him with leveled guns. There was a great bustle between the Tusks now, showing that the cargo of the schooner, whatever it was, was being landed, and it was natural to suppose that there existed an understanding between the crew and the men on the island.

"Don't try to shoot!" a voice said in good English. "My men have you covered."

"Who are you?" asked Ned, not much surprised, after what had taken place, to find the party officered by an American.

"An officer in the United States army," was the unexpected reply.

"Then what are you doing all this shooting for?" demanded Frank. "Why did you molest the *Manhattan*, here on government service?"

"We'll see about the service she is on later," replied the officer. "Beat it for the harbor, all of you."

When the party reached the Tusks the crew of the schooner was busy unloading long pine boxes which looked as if they contained shovels and hoes, and seemed to be very heavy. The second vessel, the one which had been observed in the north, lay close in.

"Where's the officer in charge?" asked Ned, as they approached a group standing at the head of the harbor.

The officer who had captured the boys pointed out a tall, rather fine-looking man who was standing, pencil and paper in hand, checking off the boxes as they crashed down on the beach.

"There he is," was the information given. "Lieutenant Carstens, and a mighty good man at that!"

The Filipino boy stepped forward, as if anticipating a friendly greeting and then drew back in confusion. Lieutenant Carstens had looked him fairly in the face and had not recognized him.

Ned did not step forward to present his side of the case to the man pointed out to him, for there was no need to do so. The man was the one he had met in the tea house in Yokohama, in the Street of a Thousand Steps.

"Go on and give him a talk," Frank said, as Ned drew back.

"There is not a bit of use," Ned replied. "The man is a crook, and is not acting for the government here."

"Then why these vessels?" asked Frank. "He must be a good deal of a wise crook if he sails about with a fleet like that."

"I rather think he is a good deal of a wise crook," Ned replied. "He's the man whom Jimmie saw mixing with the rebel chiefs."

"But look here," Frank insisted, "look at the blue coats unloading the boxes. They are in the service, for sure. This Lieutenant Car-

stens may be a crook, but he has a command in the United States navy, all right."

One of the men who was assisting the Lieutenant in the tally now called his attention to the prisoners and the Filipino boy standing by their side. He listened for a moment to what was said to him, then motioned for the Filipino boy to approach. The two talked for a moment in Spanish, and then the boy, evidently much against his will, was sent on board the ship.

In a few moments the Lieutenant turned to Ned, a smile of victory on his lips.

"Well," he said, "your career as a pirate has been brought to a sudden close."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Ned.

The question was a natural one, but was entirely unnecessary, for the boy knew what was meant—knew on what desperate chance the lives of himself and his friends rested.

"I mean," answered the Lieutenant, "that you are under arrest for piracy on the high seas. Also for deliberate murder. Also for the larceny of the *Manhattan* from Manila."

"Very well," Ned replied, coolly, "take me back to Manila for trial. I am willing to go with you."

"We don't take pirates back to Manila for trial," was the sneering reply. "We give them a hearing and shoot them down on the spot. I'll attend to your case directly."

"You've got your nerve!" cried Frank.

The Lieutenant turned with a snarl and pointed the end of his pencil toward the two boys.

"Put them in irons," he said. "We'll give them a drum-head when we get the goods out of the *Clara* and will shoot them at midnight."

The boys made no resistance. That would have been useless, for there were twenty to one against them.

"And," continued the officer, "send for the relatives of the natives this man Nestor murdered on Banta Isle. We'll have them for witnesses."

"They attacked me," Ned said, in a second sorry that he had spoken at all.

"They were ordered to recover the *Manhattan*, property stolen from the government," was the reply, "and you resisted them. Put a stick in his mouth, Ben, if he talks any more."

Ben, a muscular, scar-faced fellow of thirty, stepped forward and took a seat on the rock near the captives. He had the mild, soft eyes of a

student of theology and the square jaw and hard hands of a prize fighter.

"You're to keep your face closed—see?" he said, nudging Ned in the side with an elbow. "You're to keep your clapper tied," he went on, "or I'll tie it up for you. And how in the name of the Seven Seas did you ever get in such a scrape, Ned Nestor?"

The last words were spoken very softly, but before that Ned had recognized the man as one he had known and liked on the water front in New York.

"You're in a bad box," Ben went on, "for that slob means business."

"There's just one chance for us," Ned whispered. "If the rockets are all right, and the gunboat is not too far away to see the signals!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLARE OF A ROCKET.

Ben looked at Ned in astonishment.

"You never got the *Manhattan* away, did you?" he asked.

"The boys got it away," replied Ned.

The sailor remained silent for a moment, his face turned away from the man he was supposed to be watching. When he spoke it was in a very low tone, with little movement of the lips, and with his face still turned toward the lieutenant.

"You should have gone with it," he said.

Ned did not reply. He had, at the last moment, made a rush for the boat, but had been kept away from her by the natives.

"Carstens has been after you for a long time," the sailor went on. "He got his orders at Manila."

"What was he doing on the island with the rebels?" asked Ned.

"I'm sure I don't know," was the whispered reply. "There's something mighty funny going on here. More mischief, I'm afraid. No one

knows what is in the boxes that are now being unloaded."

"What does he say they are?" asked Ned.

"Supplies, to keep the chiefs good-natured."

"He brought them from Manila?"

"No, he picked them up over on the China coast."

"I thought so," Ned answered.

"Now, what is the answer to that remark," asked Ben.

"You'll get the answer directly," Ned replied. "Listen to the rattle of the alleged supplies when a box is thrown down hard!"

"I was noticing that."

"Sounds like guns?" asked Ned.

"Yes, indeed, but why should the government be supplying the dagoes with guns? We have all we can do to keep them decent when they have no arms at all."

"You sailed from Manila with Carstens?" said Ned, putting his statement in the form of a question.

"Yes, I left Manila on the *Clara*. He seemed to be all right until after we picked up the boxes on the China coast. He was a good fellow, when we left Manila, but he was confined to his cabin for a day and a night and has been ugly as

sin ever since. He came out of the sickness looking a bit seedy but that ought not to cause him to turn into a red-handed brute, had it?"

"He has been acting badly, has he?" asked Ned.

"As if the very Old Nick was in him," was the reply. "You heard what he said about a drum-head court martial for you?" the sailor added.

"Of course."

"Well, he means it. He's got something against you that doesn't show on the outside. He'll try you in five minutes and shoot you within the next ten."

"That would be murder."

"Well, he has the authority, under the general instructions regarding the treatment of pirates," said the sailor.

"But you know that I'm not a pirate, and so does Carstens," Ned said. "You know that I came here in the *Manhattan* without the consent of the officers at Manila, but you know that I was only defending myself when those natives were shot."

"I don't know anything about it," was the discouraging reply. "I've heard you spoken of as a pirate for the past few days, and the members

of the crew all believe you to be one. If he orders them to shoot you, they'll do it."

"Yes, I presume so," Ned said, soberly.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked the sailor, after a short pause.

"The question," Ned replied, "is what are you going to do about it?"

"I couldn't do a thing if I tried," was the reply. "When Carstens hears that the *Manhattan* got away he will be red-headed, and will order the trial to proceed at once. I'll see what I can do with some of the men I know well, but the chances are that I'll only get myself into trouble without doing you any good."

"All you can do," Ned said, "is to delay the trial, and the execution, if it comes to that."

The officer who had made the arrest, after failing to seize the boat, now approached the Lieutenant and said something to him in a low tone.

"What?" the latter almost screamed. "You let the boat get away?"

"They were too quick for us," was the reply.

"Too quick for you?" howled the Lieutenant. "Do you know what you've done? You've ruined all my plans—the plans of the government. Inefficiency is worse than open diso-

bedience, and you may consider yourself under arrest!"

The officer saluted and turned away, a scowl on his face.

"There is a likely man to talk with first," Ned suggested to the sailor. "He will doubtless listen to you."

The Lieutenant now turned sharply toward the prisoners.

"What's going on there?" he demanded. "What are you talking to that pirate for?" he added, approaching Ben threateningly.

"Trying to see what I could get out of him, sir," Ben replied, saluting.

"Well?"

"Not a thing!"

"Then cut it out," said the officer, moving away.

By this time the boxes were all out of the *Clara*, and the other vessel was brought up to the Tusks. A great pile of boxes lay in the sandy beach, and these the Lieutenant counted over for the second time. Then he beckoned to a dignified looking native and went over the ranks of boxes with him.

"Is it correct?" asked Carstens.

The other nodded and passed a slip of paper to the officer.

"Yokohama exchange," Ned heard him say.

"It must be that the native is paying for the guns," Ned said, and Ben, looking half frightened, half angry, nodded his head.

The Lieutenant now turned to the unloading of the *Martha*, which was now at the north Tusk. The hatches were soon lifted and the unloading of the cargo began. It consisted principally of boxes and barrels.

"Ammunition," Ned whispered.

Again the sailor nodded.

"Nice old government officer he is!" Frank said, in a half whisper.

"He doesn't act like himself," Ben said, "not since he came out of the cabin after being ill for a day and a night. And the boxes coming out of the hold now do not look like the boxes that were put in it on the China coast. I don't know what to make of it all."

During all this talk Ned had been listening intently for the shriek of a rocket, casting his eyes up the mountain side in the hope of seeing the green light of a signal reflected there. But no reports of rockets in the sky had come to his ears, and there were no signal lights reflected on the mountain.

The moon was well up in the heavens when the unloading of the *Martha* was completed. Then the Lieutenant called the dignified native to his side again, and once more the toll of the boxes was taken and a slip passed over to the officer. This done, the men went back into the hold again and began unloading small boxes, evidently containing tinned provisions.

"There," whispered Ben, "those are the goods Lieutenant Carstens took on board at the Chinese port."

"Then where were the guns and the ammunition taken on?" asked Ned.

"That is what gets me," was the reply.

"Tinned goods were also put into the *Clara?*" Ned asked.

"Yes; and they are going to take them out."

"Thought they'd get the guns out first," said Ned. "Don't you see," he added, "that this man Carstens is a traitor! Can't you see that he is turning guns, undoubtedly stolen from the government, over to the rebel chiefs, and getting his pay for them?"

"It looks that way," was the slow reply, "but what am I to do about it?"

"Talk with some of the men," urged Ned. "If those arms are taken away from this island

by the natives they will be used to murder soldiers and sailors."

"I know it," said the sailor, "but what can I do?"

"Go and talk to the officer he just ordered under arrest."

"And have him report the conversation in order to get back into the good graces of the Lieutenant!" said Ben. "I'm not quite so green as that."

"What sort of a reputation does this man Carstens bear in army circles?" asked Ned, presently, seeing that it was of no use to argue with the sailor, who was afraid of being brought into trouble if he tried to aid the boy.

"First-class," was the reply. "He is known as a brave and dependable officer."

"And any action he might take here would be endorsed at Manila?"

"Yes; I think so."

"Then," Ned said, grimly, "if the *Manhattan* doesn't get within speaking distance of the gunboat very soon there will be a couple of funerals on this island."

"I am afraid you are right," said Ben. "If I could do anything for you I would, but—"

"Stop that clatter there!" shouted Carstens,

pointing the end of his pencil toward Ned. "Didn't I tell you to put a stick in his mouth if he opened it again?"

Ben saluted and said that he was trying to get a confession out of the prisoner, and the Lieutenant turned back to the work of tallying the tinned goods. It was quite evident that he did not intend to leave that important duty to any subordinate.

Ned knew that he was in the tightest hole his love for detective work had ever fitted him into. He knew that the Lieutenant suspected him, and would not hesitate to order him shot after a mock trial. He had little doubt that the officer had, after his return from Yokohama, managed to poison the minds of the officers at Manila against him. That was why, he thought, he had been ordered by Major John Ross to remain at Manila until instructions could be received from Washington.

He understood that Carstens might murder him there at will and so close his mouth forever. After the murder there would be no one to tell of the secret meetings on the islands where the rebel chiefs were assembled, no one to tell of the murder of Brown at the Yokohama tea house, no one to tell of the arms unloaded there and

turned over to the Filipinos—unless the sailors should take it into their heads to investigate the long boxes and take their lives in their hands by reporting their discoveries.

Lieutenant Carstens certainly had everything to his taste there, and Ned was of the opinion that he would not be very long in exercising his authority to the limit. While the boy was thinking over the situation, trying to find some way out of the peril he was in, a sleepy-looking young man came out of the cabin of the *Clara* and stepped ashore. He was neatly dressed, with a handsome face and alert figure. Lieutenant Carstens bowed to him as he approached the place where he stood and pointed to the prisoners.

"Do you know who that is?" whispered Ned to the sailor.

"No," was the reply, "except that he is the son of a prominent politician in the United States."

Ned did not need to ask another question then. Jimmie had described the senator's son, and Ned knew that the young man who had held possession of the treaty box was there, in conference with the Lieutenant.

"I guess," the boy mused, "they've got the

top hand. The Lieutenant has his military authority, and also has the senator's son here to swear to anything he asks him to!"

"You should have made a getaway in the *Manhattan,*" Ben said, in a moment.

"Then I wouldn't have seen the unloading of the arms," Ned answered.

Ben arose and stood yawning by the side of his prisoner. The Lieutenant and the senator's son approached and stood for a moment looking down on the two captives.

"Why not call the drum-head now?" asked the senator's son. "It will help to pass a couple of hours which might otherwise be dull."

"Call it, then," said the officer. "The sooner it is over the better."

Ned looked up to the mountain as one looks to a friend for assistance and cheer when things are going hard, and the mountain did not disappoint him. For there, high up, was the green light of a distant rocket.

The *Manhattan* had found the gunboat and was using the signals.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MAN BEHIND THE DOOR.

It was a second later that the puff of the exploding rocket reached the ears of those gathered about the boxes on the island, for sound does not travel as rapidly as light. When it came, Lieutenant Carstens made a dash for the side of the mountain and began the ascent. After ten anxious minutes he was back again with a malevolent grin on his face.

"The gunboat has captured the *Manhattan*," he said, facing Ned.

Ned made no reply, for he was not a little puzzled at the remark. It indicated that the speaker believed that he had as complete control over the actions of those on the gunboat as he had over the conduct of those on board the *Clara* and the *Martha*. If this was true, there was nothing more to hope for. The gunboat would bring Pat, Jack, and Jimmie back as prisoners, and the drum-head would deal with five prisoners instead of two.

The Lieutenant now dispatched a man to the shelf of rock on the mountain which Ned had previously occupied, instructing him to report

the progress of the gunboat, supposed to be bringing in her prize. From time to time the watchman called out that the two boats were rapidly nearing the harbor, and Ned listened to the reports with varying emotions. Now he was certain that the officer in charge of the gunboat would understand the situation; now he was almost sure that the officer and Carstens had had an understanding with each other from the first.

Two chiefs, evidently men of distinction among the native tribes, now approached the Lieutenant and spoke to him in Spanish. After replying Carstens turned to the son of the senator.

"Clem," he said, "perhaps you would better bring the box from the cabin. These men are satisfied with the goods they have received, and are ready to sign."

And so the treaty was to be executed there—after the receipt of sufficient arms and ammunition to make the revolt against the government formidable. Ned saw the craft with which the game had been played, and wondered if the officer who was coming on the gunboat could be induced to make an examination of the boxes

on the beach and the box about to be brought from the cabin.

If he could, that would end the trouble so far as Ned and his companions were involved in it. If he stood hand-in-glove with Carstens, however, he would pretend to doubt the statements offered by the prisoners and refuse to make any investigation at all. In this case, there was likely to be murder done before morning.

"Gunboat rounding the point!" called the lookout.

The critical moment was near at hand, and Frank and Ned looked into each other's faces with apprehension in their eyes. Still, there was no weakening, no outward sign of the mental commotion within.

Presently the gunboat rounded the point to the north and slid into the harbor between the Tusks, followed closely by the *Manhattan.* Ned saw that the boys were still on the *Manhattan,* but that two men in uniform were there with them. It looked to him as if the lads had been placed under arrest, for they did not appear as jubilant as they would doubtless have looked if their story had been taken at its full face value.

Lieutenant Carstens appeared to be astonished and decidedy out of temper when the

commander of the gunboat stepped out on the north Tusk. He was nervous, too, and cursed roundly at one of the men who crossed his path as he advanced to meet the officer. The three boys, who did not now act like prisoners, flocked off the *Manhattan* and gathered around Ned and Frank. Their faces, however, still showed anxiety rather than joy at the success of their efforts to bring the gunboat to the island.

"I presume you have your instructions regarding the *Manhattan* and her crew?" Lieutenant Carstens said, after the formalities had been gone through with.

"I understand that the boys took the boat out without permission," was the reply. "I am ordered to return her to Manila and to place the boys under arrest."

This was encouraging, for Ned knew that they would be safer under the guard of the captain of the gunboat than that of Carstens. Everything could be explained if they were taken back to Manila, and not shot like dogs, without a trial.

"Since leaving Manila," Carstens went on, "they have attacked several native settlements and murdered several persons. I already have them under arrest for piracy."

"What is the proposition?" asked the other.

"In my judgment they should be tried here, and, if convicted, executed at the scene of their latest crime."

"I protest against that," said the other.

"See here, Curtis," Carstens said, roughly, "these fellows are my prisoners, and I am here with special orders. That will be all."

"Hardly all," was the cool reply, "for I have my gunboat in the harbor."

Encouraged by this statement, Ned stepped forward and raised his bound hands.

"May I speak a word?" he asked.

"Certainly not!" said Carstens.

"Go ahead!" the captain of the gunboat, Frederick Curtis, said. "George," he added, addressing an officer, "go to the boat and train her guns on this delightful party."

Carstens turned deadly pale but smiled, and saluted.

"I'm sure you will do nothing rash," he said.

"I shall not overstep my instructions," was the reply. "What have you to say?" he continued, facing Ned.

"I want a few words with you in private," was the reply.

"I protest!" shouted the Lieutenant.

"Best speak here," was the decision of the captain.

At this moment the senator's son made his appearance on the Tusk with a steel box under his arm. He advanced quickly to the group and passed the box to Lieutenant Carstens.

"First," Ned began, "I ask you, Captain Curtis, to take charge of the box just given to Lieutenant Carstens."

Captain Curtis extended his hand for the box, but the Lieutenant drew back.

"This is unusual," the lieutenant said, "irregular and discourteous."

"I waive the point for the present," Captain Curtis said, "but I insist that the box shall not leave your hands until it passes into mine."

"Next," Ned went on, encouraged by the words and manner of Captain Curtis, "I want you to have the cabin of the *Clara* searched."

Lieutenant Carstens approached the speaker in a threatening manner, but Curtis stepped in front of him.

"Why shouldn't the cabin of the *Clara* be searched?" the latter demanded.

"You shall pay for this indignity!" Carstens roared, turning away from the group, with the box still under his arm. Ned pointed to the box, and Captain Curtis stopped him.

"I want that box," he said, calmly.

Lieutenant Carstens hastened his steps and lifted the steel box in his hands, as if about to toss it into the sea. Before he could execute his purpose, however, the box was seized by the Captain.

"If you wish to assist in the search of the cabin," Captain Curtis said, "we will go there together. Come along, Nestor," he added, turning to Ned and cutting the cord which held his wrists. "You suggested the move, and you shall see what is discovered in the search."

The Lieutenant moved along with the others, but paused at the head of the stairway leading down into the little stern cabin.

"I protest against this!" he roared, his face bloodless with passion or fright.

"By the way," Captain Curtis said, lifting the steel box high in the air, "this appears to be quite heavy. Suppose we open it here?"

"There is no key," Carstens replied.

Ned held up the odd-shaped key he had found on the island first visited.

"I think I can open it," he said, "but you'll find that Carstens has a key if you'll take a look through his clothes."

"Will you surrender the key?" asked Captain Curtis of the Lieutenant.

"The boy lies!" thundered Carstens. "I have no key."

"What does the box contain?" asked the Captain.

"I don't exactly know," Ned replied, "but it is my opinion that it contains a treaty pledging certain tribes to unite in rebellion against the United States provided they are supplied with guns and ammunition."

"Your opinion is of little account!" gritted the Lieutenant.

"And I believe," Ned went on, "that other papers are in the box—papers giving a history of the plot, also papers stolen from the government. Anyway, if you say so, Captain, I'll open the box with my key and we'll soon find out."

"Perhaps we would better retire to the cabin," suggested Captain Curtis, noting the curious faces gathering about. "We can settle the whole matter there."

Lieutenant Carstens would not have entered the cabin if one of the officers of the gunboat had not crowded him down the stairway.

"This is an outrage!" he shouted.

The senator's son now came hastily down the steps, his face red with rage, his fingers working convulsively, as if already playing about the throat of an enemy.

"That box is mine!" he cried. "I demand that it be returned to me unopened. I am the son of a United States senator."

"If what I suspect is true," Ned said, "you will need all the political pull a member of the senate has in order to keep yourself out of the penitentiary."

"Put that boy out of this cabin!" snarled the young man. "This is my private room. I paid for its use during the cruise."

Ned whispered a few words to the Captain, and the latter turned with a smile to a door opening at the rear of the little room where the excited group stood.

"Well," he said, "there is a question here as to whether the box contains any treasonable documents. If the box belongs to you, open it and we'll see if the charge is true or false. If it is false the box shall be returned to you."

"I have lost my key," was the reply.

"How long ago?" asked Ned.

The young man turned a supercilious face on the boy, but answered:

"Several days ago. What is it to you?"

"Where were you when you first missed it?" Ned persisted.

"That does not concern you," was the reply.

"If you lost it in Captain Godwin's station," Ned said, with a smile, "I presume I have it."

He held up the key he had found on the river bank, among the bushes, on the morning following the abduction of Lieutenant Rowe, and the other lunged for it.

"Never mind!" Ned laughed, dodging away, "I don't care to part with the key just now. After the investigation of the box is over you may have it."

"Unlock the box," ordered the Captain.

Ned stepped forward with his key, but was brought to a stop by a beating on the door of the rear cabin.

"I forgot," the boy said, "and the man in there doubtless desires his liberty. If some of you will unlock the door you will find the man the government sent away in charge of this expedition."

"What do you mean?" asked the Captain, while Carstens sank back in his chair with a groan.

"I think," Ned replied, "that you will find the real Lieutenant Carstens on the other side of that door."

CHAPTER XIX.

BOY SCOUTS UNEARTH PLOT.

The door was opened instantly, and a man in the uniform of a lieutenant in the United States Navy, stepped forth. He was pale and haggard, and there was a bandage about his head, but his eyes were clear and bright. Even in his emaciated condition his resemblance to the man crouching in his chair was striking.

There was a silence in the cabin for an instant as the man stepped forth. Surprise was depicted on every face except those of Ned and Captain Curtis.

"You see I was right," Ned said.

"You are Lieutenant Carstens?" asked the Captain.

"I am," was the slow reply, "and I ask that the traitor cowering in the chair be placed under arrest."

"That has already been done," the Captain said. "How long have you been confined in the cabin?"

"Several days," was the reply, "ever since the first day out, and each day seemed an eter-

nity of years, for I knew that a treasonable scheme was afoot. If you will open that steel box," he added, "you will find the proof of my words."

"So they tried to corrupt you, did they?" asked Ned, applying the key to the box.

"Indeed they did," was the reply, "and failing, they determined to take my life. Why they delayed doing so is more than I can understand."

"Perhaps it may be well to use the key held by this man Keene, who has been personating me for so many days," Lieutenant Carstens said.

"I know nothing about the box or its contents!" Keene shouted. "It was given to me by the senator's son, and now I command you to restore it to him as I received it, unopened."

Captain Curtis raised his hand and three men sprang upon Keene, who struggled violently for a moment and then dropped back, inert and almost lifeless. A search of his pockets revealed a key which was the exact duplicate of the one in the possession of Ned, and with this the steel box was opened.

Captain Curtis took a sheaf of papers from it and handed them to Ned.

"See if your guess had any merit," he said, with a laugh.

"Here," Ned began, separating the papers one by one, "is a treaty signed by many native chiefs. Under its provisions, a thousand islands in the Philippine group would have been in open revolt within a week."

"This is all news to me!" gasped the senator's son, pale and frightened.

"And yet you claimed the box!" Ned said.

"But only as a piece of property placed in my possession as a sacred charge," the young man answered. "I didn't know what it contained. This man Keene, who has been posing as Lieutenant Carstens, alone knew what was in the box."

"That is false!" shouted Keene, "for you wrote the treaty, and witnessed the signing of it. It was all done in the interest of that gigantic corporation of which your very honorable father is the head!"

"Are you ready to tell the truth at last?" asked the Captain.

"Yes," answered Keene, "I'll tell all I know about it. I was poor and in disgrace in army circles, and this senator offered me more than I could refuse. That is all there is to it. I'll tell the truth, fast enough."

"You're a fool!" shouted the senator's son. "Who will believe what you say? As you said a moment ago, you are in disgrace in army circles now, having been cashiered for cheating at cards. No officer would take your word, or your oath, for that matter."

"And he," Keene faltered, pointing a shaking finger at the young man, "was sent out here to pay me the price of my treachery and to see that I delivered the goods!"

"It is false!" the young man replied. "All a lie! Wait until you hear from Washington! Then you'll see who is a traitor!"

"And this," Ned went on, holding up another paper, "is the order which followed Lieutenant Rowe to Captain Godwin's headquarters. Why they kept it, I do not know, but keep it they did."

"Read it," commanded the Captain.

"It orders Lieutenant Rowe," the boy summarized, "to arrest Tag, Captain Godwin's servant, and half a dozen other Filipinos at Godwin's headquarters and place them in irons. It informs Lieutenant Rowe that he must remain at Godwin's quarters until further instructions are sent to him."

"That paper," Keene said, "was retained to prove to the native chiefs what difficulties we,

their friends, were encountering in trying to assist them in building up a confederacy of their own."

"It seems to me that there is nothing more to say about this matter," Ned said. "We boys came to the Philippines to assist the government in unearthing this plot and bringing the leaders to punishment, and there seems to be nothing more to be done."

"But I don't quite understand it yet," Captain Curtis said. "How did you know that this box contained the treaty? How did you know that Keene was personating Lieutenant Carstens?"

"This man Keene," Ned laughed, "played his hand awkwardly. Through spies in the offices at Manila, doubtless, he learned that the treachery of the Filipinos at Godwin's island had been discovered. He knew that the government would look there first, and determined to block the investigation until he could accomplish what he had set out to do and get his blood money."

Keene frowned up from his chair at the boy, but said nothing. The senator's son smiled weakly and kept his eyes on the floor.

"Go on!" the Captain said, greatly interested.

"Lieutenant Rowe was detailed to investigate the matter, and ordered to the Godwin island. If the isle has another name I have never learned of the fact."

"It is called Penalty Island," smiled the Captain, "because the man sent there is supposed to be given the detail for some oversight of duty. However, in the case of Captain Godwin, I do not think this holds good."

"After the Lieutenant left for Penalty Island, then," Ned went on, "Keene discovered what was going on and feared that Tag and his fellows, if arrested, would snitch, as the boys have it. Then the messenger was sent after Rowe with more definite instructions. That is, he was given more positive instructions and sent out in haste. On the way to Penalty Island the instructions were stolen and another paper substituted.

"While the original order required Rowe to arrest Tag and his fellow conspirators, the false one required the Lieutenant to return at once to Manila. This would indeed have blocked the investigation and given Keene and his confederates time in which to complete their work of organizing the tribes.

"But the messenger knew what the papers he had been given contained, and when they

were read by the Lieutenant—exactly opposite to the instructions given him—there was a pretty row. He informed Rowe of the substitution and advised him not to obey the orders delivered.

"Tag and his men, clustered about the windows and porch of the nipa hut, heard what was going on and decided to get rid of Lieutenant Rowe and his party by assassination. This plan was not carried out because this young man Clem, whom we know only as the senator's son, arrived with a party of Americans and Filipinos.

"This man Keene might have been with the party, but I'm not sure of that. I don't know the date when he left Manila, or when he took charge of the *Clara* as Lieutenant Carstens."

"I was not there!" Keene gritted out.

"Oh, yes, you were!" insisted the senator's son. "You were in command of the *Clara* at that time, with Lieutenant Carstens locked up in his cabin."

"That is a falsehood," Keene said, turning to Ned. "I was there at Penalty Island, but I was not at that time in command of the *Clara*."

"And only for me," Clem went on, "the Lieutenant and his men would have been shot instead of being taken prisoners."

Keene settled back into his chair without replying to this.

"Why did you go to Yokohama?" asked Ned.

"So you recognized me?" growled Keene. "You knew me when you saw me in the tea house? Well, I went there to kill Brown!"

The assertion was made so savagely, so recklessy, that the listeners gazed at the speaker in wonder.

"Brown," continued Keene, "was blackmailing me. He was at Penalty Island and was threatening to reveal what he knew unless I gave him a large sum of money. He went to Japan and I followed and caused him to be killed."

"And then you went back to Manila and went aboard the *Clara*?" asked Ned.

"Yes; and came down to witness the signing of the treaty."

"Where did you get the guns?" asked Ned.

Captain Curtis gave a quick start at the question.

"The guns?" he asked. "What guns?"

"The guns which were unloaded here tonight," was the reply, "and turned over to the

chiefs. If you will look through Keene's pockets again you will find drafts in payment for them."

"Where did you get the guns?" demanded the Captain.

"Stole them from the government!" was the reply. "We caused them to be loaded on board at Manila, before Carstens went aboard. He never knew they were in the hold. We were to pick up a lot of tinned provisions on the China coast—left there by a wrecked supply boat—and carry them to natives supposed to be on the verge of starvation. I took Carstens' place just before we reached the place where the tinned goods were. What I want to know is this," he added. "How did you learn so much about what we were doing, and intended to do?"

"This young man," pointing to Clem, "had a battle with one of the men at the nipa hut," was the reply. "He was not so strong as his opponent, and was dragged about the floor. If you will look at his heels you will see three large nails protruding from the right one. I saw them when he first came out of the cabin, when he lifted his shoe to strike a match for his cigarette.

"During this struggle his right hand was injured a bit, cut so that the blood ran from the wound. Now, after getting the prisoners to the

canoe, he opened the treaty box in order to place therein the original instructions given to the messenger. If you will look at the paper you will observe a slight smear of blood.

"When he opened the box he took from it a very rough draft of the treaty and threw it away, after burning it about half up. I found what was left of it, bearing his mark, the bloody smear, and so learned what was in the box—beyond all reasonable doubt. He lost his key there, and I found it. The other key was in the possession of Keene, as you know."

"But why did you go to Yokohama?" asked Keene.

"I followed Brown there. At least I followed you and him to Manila. There you both disappeared, and I was told that Brown had gone to Yokohama. Do you remember of having trouble with him in a saloon at Manila, and threatening him? Well, I found that out, and I found out that you had been having trouble with him ever since returning to the city.

"It was easy to get his description, and so I followed him to Yokohama, believing that I could get his confession. He fled to Japan because of his fear of you, I take it?"

"He went to Japan because I promised to meet him there and give him a large sum of money," was the sullen reply. "I went there to kill him!"

"And then you got the *Clara*, and circulated about the islands in her launch, and conferred with the native chiefs. I frightened you away from a couple of the conferences, as you know. You were betraying your country, and trying to place the crime on the hands of Lieutenant Carstens!"

"I should have succeeded, and got away with a fortune only for you!" growled the fellow. "Well," he added, "it is all in the game. I lost out and you won out. Good luck to you!"

They were too late to stop the sudden lifting of the hand to the mouth, and when they lifted him from the floor of the cabin he was dead. The senator's son stood over the body for a moment and turned to Captain Curtis.

"You know all about it now," he said. "If I am under arrest, take me to Manila. I can get bail there."

The guns were reloaded on the *Clara*, the ammunition on the *Martha*, and the ships sailed at once for Manila, with half a dozen native chiefs who had come to receive the arms locked

up in the cabin formerly occupied by Lieutenant Carstens. The removal of the arms and the capture of the leaders brought the conspiracy to a close and the matter was hushed up. Tag and his companions were arrested and punished.

The young man who claimed to be the son of a senator pleaded guilty to receiving stolen arms, stolen from the government, and was sentenced to a long term in a federal prison. When it was all over, after Major John Ross had condescendingly admitted the great value of Ned's services, after the government had paid the boy a large sum for his work, the five lads, Ned, Frank, Jack, Jimmie and Pat, arranged to spend a month among the islands in the *Manhattan.*

"Bounding from isle to isle!" Jack cried. "Lying in the boat when you don't know whether the sea is the sky or the sky is the sea, both being so blue!"

"Well," Jimmie said, "I'll go along to see that you don't get captured again."

"I'd like to know whatever became of that man French," Ned said, laughing.

"Oh, he ducked," Frank said. "I heard Captain Curtis asking about him last night.

He was just a paid thief, and jumped his parole."

"And we'll take Pat along," Jack said, "to leave signs in grass and send up smoke signals of distress. How did you get the two columns to working, Pat?" he added.

"The natives are lazy and didn't like to work, so I offered to bring the wood for them and build a fire. Well, I built two fires, as you know, and they suspected something and tied me up again."

"You're a handy Irishman, all right!" laughed Jack. "What have you done with the Filipino Boy Scout? I saw him with you last night!".

"He's going back to Washington," was the reply. "We may meet him over there."

On the following morning the boys would have been away in the *Manhattan*, but that night Captain Curtis visited them and left a sealed envelope with Ned.

"You are to open that at Portland, Oregon," he said.

Ned did not look altogether pleased when he read the papers contained in the sealed envelope.

"There's going to be trouble up in the Northwest," he said, "and we're going there on

government service. And we're going to have aeroplanes! Think of it!"

There was a shout, and Ned was almost buried under a collection of legs and arms.

"Whoop—ee!" cried Jack. "Me for the aeroplanes!"

THE END.

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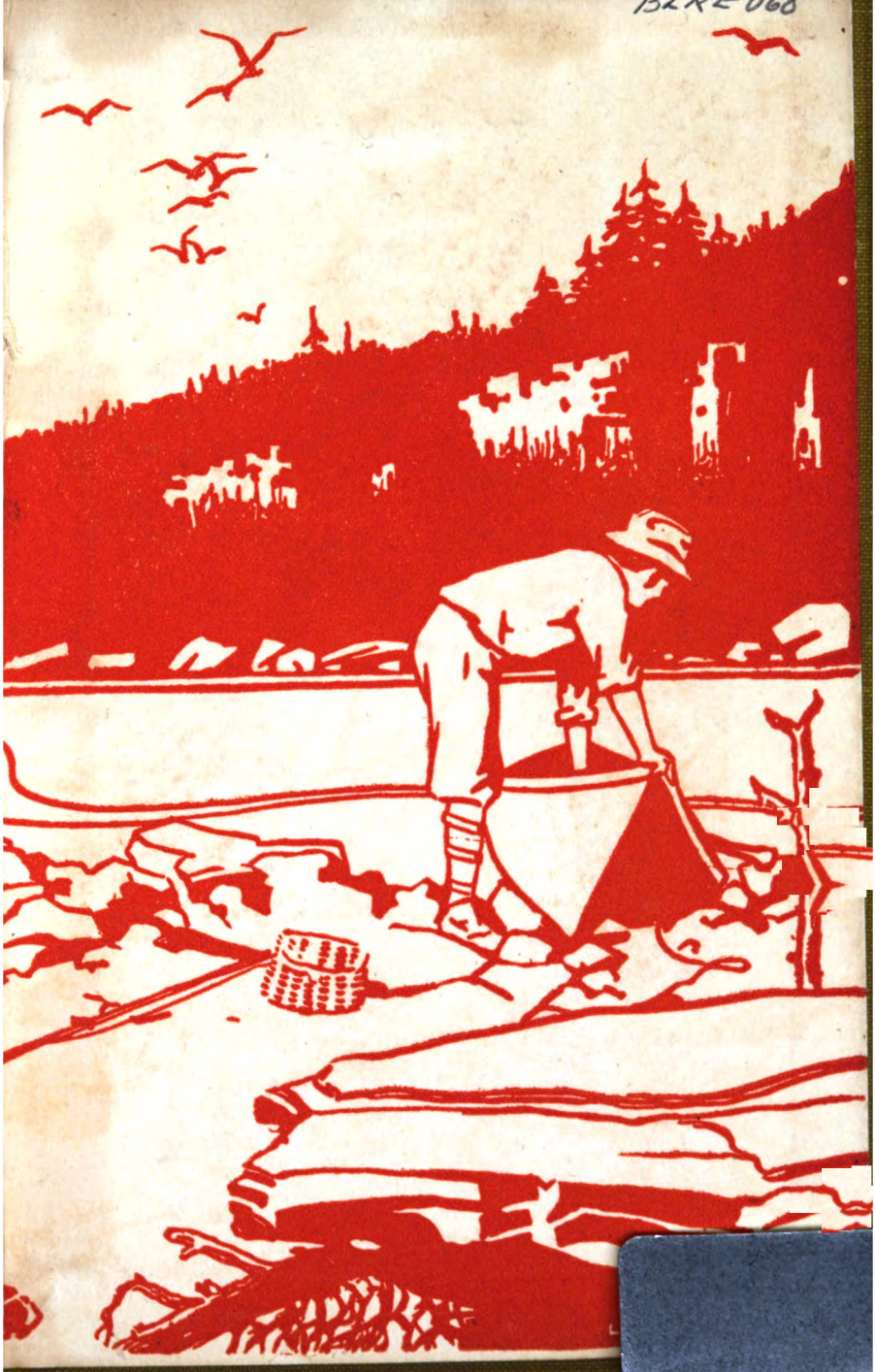
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